

*Tales from*  
**EASTERN LANDS**



## *Introduction*

THIS BOOK is a collection of some popular old-time tales and legends from nine countries of South and South-East Asia, written especially for children. A country's folklore reflects the customs, beliefs, traditions and superstitions of its people. Usually many tales have morals and depict sayings, for it is through the fascinating medium of story-telling that people down the ages have tried to pass on the wisdom and experience of life from generation to generation.

Varied as the stories are, there is nonetheless a certain unity of thought running through them. For example, the tales illustrate the unshakable human faith that ultimately goodness must triumph over evil, or that there is no difficulty or problem that intelligence cannot resolve. There are stories of kings and queens and legends of gods and goddesses glorifying generosity, kindness and loyalty as against greed, selfishness and cruelty. Then we have stories from Burma, Tibet, Malaysia and Indonesia of animal

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Now and again one comes across a striking similarity in some stories from different countries—a similarity of reasoning, or of situation. Compare, for instance, stories like *The Buffalo Boy* (Vietnam) and *The Eclipse of the Moon* (Burma); *The Devil on Horseback* (Pakistan) and *The Elephant Has a Bet With the Tiger* (Malaysia); *The Stolen Ploughshares* (India) and *The Rabbit Mediates* (Burma) and *Pelanduk's Judgement* (Malaysia); *Betel Leaf and Areca Nut* (Vietnam) and *The Legend of Lacaylacay* (Philippines); *The Great Census* (Indonesia) and *Why the Crocodile Has No Tongue* (Burma); *The Lion and the Rabbit* (India) and *The Tiger and the Shadow* (Malaysia) and *The Hare and the Lions* (Tibet). This similarity is all too evident in the tales of forest heroes like the Wise Rabbit of Burma, the Witty Hare of Tibet and the Invincible Mousedeer of Malaysia and Indonesia.

I would like to express my thanks to my friends with whom I have discussed this book and who have helped me with their suggestions and in getting material for it. I am grateful to the embassy staffs of the countries represented in this collection for guiding me to the relevant sources, particularly to Mr. D. L. D. Samarassekera of the Ceylonese High Commission. These sources have been listed at the end. I wish to express my special thanks to Pushpa Rege and Dhan Keswani for going through the typescript and making useful suggestions.

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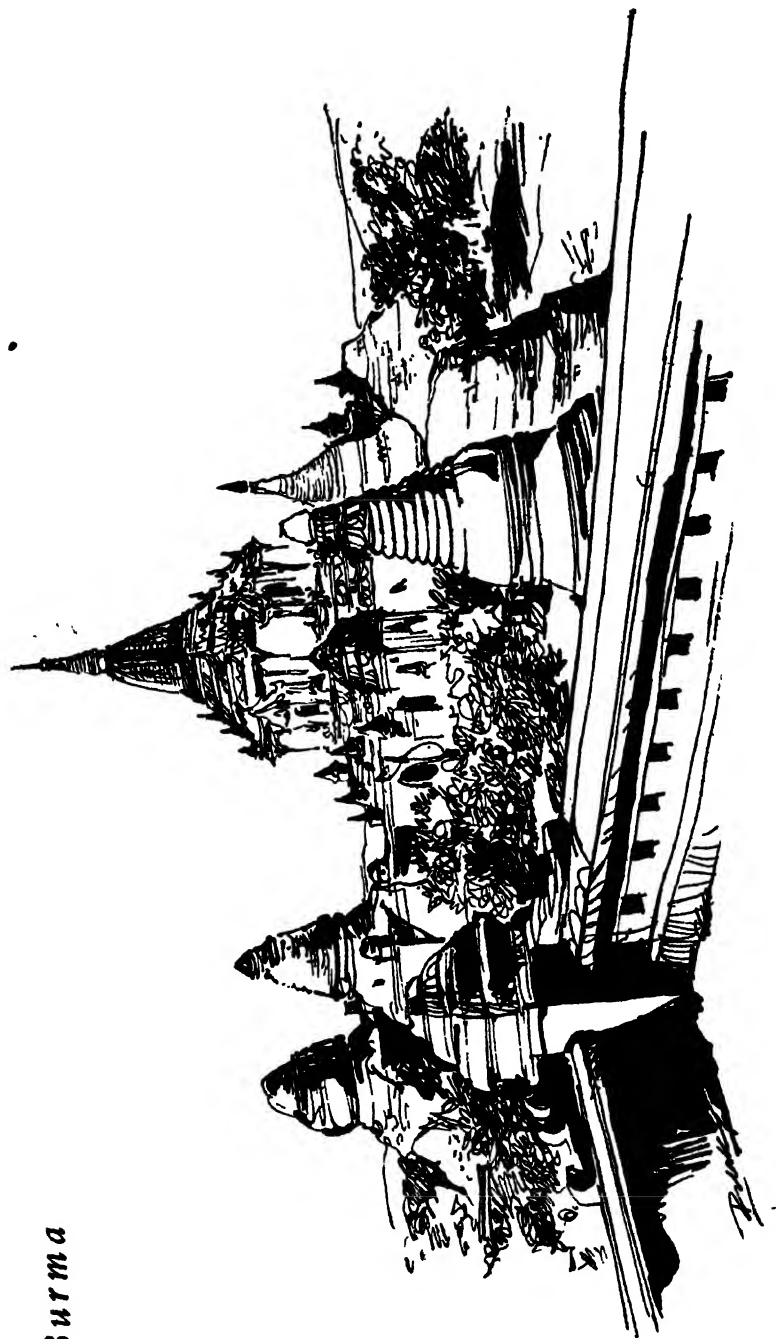
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*Burma*



### *The Wise Rabbit*

In Burmese animal tales the Rabbit is the hero, endowed with supreme wisdom. This quality of his is acknowledged by all other animals who regard him as their superior and invariably seek his help when in doubt.

## *The Rabbit Mediates*

**T**H E R E W E R E once two neighbours, one of whom owned a cow and the other a mare. The owner of the cow was called Mr. Clever because he was shrewd and knew how to turn things to his advantage. The one who owned a mare was dull-witted and credulous. He was therefore called Mr. Stupid.

One night when it was raining hard, Mr. Clever's cow gave birth to a calf. By coincidence it happened that the same night Mr. Stupid's mare also gave birth to a colt. Now Clever, being a light sleeper, heard the bleating of the calf and the neighing of the colt despite the ceaseless patter of rain. He rose, picked up a light and went down to the cowshed. It was dark; not a soul was around. The stable next door was in complete darkness. Thinking it'd be more advantageous to possess a colt, he took the calf to the stable and

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brought the colt to his cowshed. Then he went back to bed.

Long before anyone had awakened next morning, he went round the neighbourhood, looking aghast and telling everybody that a most unbelievable thing had happened.

"Do you know that my cow has given birth to a colt?"

"Oh no, no!" exclaimed the people in disbelief. "How can that happen?"

"Come and see for yourselves," said Clever.

So the people flocked in crowds to his cowshed and gazed in wonder at the placid cow and the newborn colt beside her.

When Stupid got up and found a calf in his stable, he thought that someone had tried to play a trick on Clever and himself. So he went to his neighbour's house, intending to explain and bring the colt back. But Clever would not agree.

"Isn't it a wonder that your mare should have given birth to a calf?" said Clever, his eyes wide with surprise.

"What is there to wonder?" asked Stupid indignantly. "Such an unnatural thing cannot happen. The colt is mine and the calf yours."

"You are wrong. Unnatural things do happen sometimes. Indeed, by a curious freak of nature your mare has given birth to a calf."

Stupid was not convinced. He appealed to other neighbours to intervene and settle the matter. However, since no one knew about what had happened during the night, they were not able to help. So both Clever

and Stupid decided to go to another village to find a judge who would adjudicate in their dispute.

On the way they met the Rabbit and requested him to be their judge.

"With pleasure," replied the Rabbit. He heard what each party had to say and then told them that he must have time to think.

"I will meet you in your village at sunrise on the morning of the seventh day from now. Be ready with your witnesses."

Both men thanked the Rabbit and returned to their village.

On the appointed day at sunrise the whole village with the disputants assembled to await the Rabbit. The sun rose higher and higher until it was noon but there was no sign of the Rabbit. Time passed—one hour, two hours, three hours,—and then it was evening but still Judge Rabbit had not come. Disappointed, the crowd began to disperse. It was most unlike the Rabbit not to keep his appointment.

But at sunset the Rabbit appeared. The villagers were happy to see him and enquired what had happened to delay him. The Rabbit was apologetic.

"I am so sorry to have kept you waiting all day," said the Rabbit. "I was delayed by an accident. As I was coming to you this morning, I saw a sandbank in the river on fire. The whole day I have been carrying water in a wicker crate and pouring it on the fire to put it out."

This strange explanation baffled everybody. Clever thought that the Rabbit was trying to test their intelligence. So he said, "That is impossible. How can a

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sandbank in the river be on fire? And how can you carry water in a wicker crate? It is against nature."

"Exactly," replied the Wise Rabbit calmly. "It cannot be. It is no more possible for a sandbank to be on fire than for a cow to produce a colt or for a mare to give birth to a calf. It is against nature. So take back your calf and give back the colt to Stupid."

Clever could not say a word. He looked shamefaced and foolish. The villagers applauded the Rabbit's judgement and from that day onward they always chose the Rabbit to be their judge in all their disputes.



## *The Coming of Daywaw*

IN A LITTLE hut one night a watchman sat guarding some cattle. Outside the wind blew hard and the sky was overcast. The roof of the hut had many holes and the watchman feared that if it rained, he would be soaked to the skin. Every time it thundered the poor man shivered and said to himself, "If a thief comes, I can deal with him. If a tiger comes, I can deal with him too. But if Daywaw comes, I shall be destroyed."

Now it happened that there was a thief hiding in a tree nearby, hoping that if the watchman fell asleep, he could steal the cattle. Also there was a tiger prowling in the vicinity, looking for a stray sheep. When these creatures heard the watchman's words they wondered who the Daywaw was. They did not know that it was a Pali term for "rain". So they said to themselves, "Who is this mighty Daywaw that the watchman is only afraid of him?"

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Rain came down in torrents, accompanied by thunder and lightning. In fear the tiger began to run for cover and the thief jumped down from his perch in the tree, landing straight on the tiger's back. Unable to see anything in the dark, the thief clutched at the tiger's neck thinking this was the fearful Daywaw carrying him to his den to devour him. The tiger thought the rider was the mighty Daywaw trying to break his neck. He ran wildly all night in the forest with the frightened thief astride his back.

With the first streak of light at dawn the thief saw himself mounted on the tiger's back. His blood ran cold, and as the animal ran on in circles he caught hold of a branch of a tree which had a hollow trunk. He quickly climbed up and slid into the trunk to conceal himself.

The tiger ran on, screaming, "Roughrider Daywaw is here! Roughrider Daywaw is here! He has come to destroy all of us. Beware of Roughrider Daywaw!"

He was stopped by his friend the monkey.

"What is Roughrider Daywaw? Where is he?"

The tiger related at length his adventure of the night. The monkey had never heard of Daywaw. He could not believe that anything so formidable existed in human form. He told the tiger to take him to the tree where the rider had jumped off.

Both friends went to that spot but there was nothing in sight. The monkey said that they would wait and see if the Daywaw appeared again. Feeling more secure in the day and with a friend beside him, the tiger consented. So they leaned against the trunk of the tree and waited.

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It was past noon and they were beginning to feel hungry.

"Where is your Daywaw?" asked the monkey, growing irritated.

"I am sure he will come," replied the tiger. "He is a tricky fellow. He will come upon us suddenly."

So they continued to wait. The thief hiding in the hollow of the trunk began to fidget. He was tired and very hungry and impatient to come out. But how could he dare to show himself? All of a sudden he saw two holes in the trunk. Immediately he put out his hand through one hole and pulled the monkey's tail so hard that the latter tugged to free himself and ran away in flight, shouting, "Help, help! Roughrider Daywaw is cutting off my tail".

The tiger saw the monkey in flight but could not understand why. He looked up and down, wondering what had happened when he suddenly felt a sharp poke in his back. In an instant the tiger had jumped and taken to his heels.

"Help, help! Roughrider Daywaw is out to kill me."

On and on they ran until they met the Rabbit who stopped them. Shaking and breathless, they related to him their experience with the Daywaw. The Rabbit looked incredulous.

"I know of no Daywaw. Let us all go back to the tree and look properly."

In the presence of the Wise Rabbit, the frightened animals felt bold and led the way to the tree.

Meanwhile the thief had come out of his hiding and was standing atop the tree to survey the surrounding country. As soon as he saw the tiger and the monkey

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approach in the company of the Wise Rabbit, he was scared, for he thought that the Rabbit must have explained away their fears. This so unnerved him that he lost his balance and fell right on top of them. In confusion the tiger and the monkey ran blindly in one direction while the thief ran in the other.

The Rabbit stood looking after them and said, "If they only paused to look, they'd know that there is nothing to fear."

## *Why the Crocodile has no Tongue*

A CROW WAS once flying over a river when his eye fell on a crocodile resting near the riverbank. His mouth watered to see such a large, fat crocodile. Knowing how stupid crocodiles were, he decided to entice it out of the water and kill it. So he flew down and hopped over to the river's edge.

"How are you, friend Crocodile? On a fine day like this you must come out and enjoy the beautiful view."

"Oh, I am all right here," replied the crocodile.

"Well, I can see that being in one place has cramped your outlook," said the crow. "I do not know how you like to stay in this shallow river when there is a much bigger river just a short distance away."

"Really?" asked the crocodile, greatly excited at the news. "I have never heard of it."

"If you come with me I shall show you the way," said the clever crow. "It's only about half a mile from here."

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The stupid crocodile heaved himself out of the river and followed the crow. After they had gone a considerable distance, the crocodile, being heavy, was out of breath.

"How far are we still from the river?"

"We have only walked a few yards," replied the crow. "Surely you are not tired so soon."

The crocodile did not want to admit that he was tired. "No, no," he answered. "I just wanted to know where the river was."

On and on they walked in hot sunshine along the long hard dusty road till they had gone at least three miles beyond the river. The crocodile was now faint with exhaustion and could not move another inch. His mouth was parched and he could hardly speak. He lay down to die.

The crow hopped back to him.

"You fool, I shall now leave you here. When you have died of starvation, I'll come back and eat you." So saying, the crow flew away.

Shortly after, a cartman happened to pass by. With tears in his eyes the crocodile begged the cartman to take him back to his river. The cartman was kind and he agreed. But knowing the crocodile species to be crafty, he bound it with a rope before lifting it on the cart.

On reaching the river the cartman untied the crocodile.

"Please sir," wept the crocodile, "I feel so stiff with pain. I have not the strength even to get into the water. I shall ever be your slave if you drive the cart a little way into the water. The river is very shallow."

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Unsuspecting, the cartman drove the cart into the water. When the bullocks were thigh-deep in the river, he lowered the crocodile in. But the ungrateful thing caught hold of the bullock's leg in its jaws.

"Let go," cried the cartman. "Let go the bullock, you wicked creature!"

But the crocodile held fast.

At this moment the Wise Rabbit happened to come down to the river for a drink. Seeing what was going on, he called out to the cartman.

"Hit the crocodile on the head with your stick. Hit it hard."

The cartman brought out his driving stick and struck the crocodile so hard that the latter had to let go of the bullock's leg. Then, as fast as he could, the cartman drove his cart out of the water and away.

The crocodile was furious. He swore that he would teach the interfering Rabbit a lesson.

Next morning, knowing when the Rabbit usually came to the river for a drink, he swam to the river shore and lay in wait under the water for his quarry. But, as the river was shallow, he could do little to conceal his back.

He saw the Rabbit coming and lay perfectly still so that he would be mistaken for a log. But the Rabbit was shrewd. Reaching the riverbank he sang:

"True crocodiles swim upstream,  
True logs float downstream."

To convince the Rabbit that what he saw was really a log, the crocodile floated downstream. The Rabbit

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took his chance, quickly had his drink and ran away.

The next day the crocodile was again waiting for the Rabbit, lying still like a log. The Rabbit came and sang as before:

“True crocodiles swim upstream,  
True logs float downstream.”

This time the crocodile did not move. Sensing no danger the Rabbit lowered its head for a drink but the moment he did so, the crocodile had seized him in his jaws. He then swam away, holding his victim in the mouth and swishing his tail about.

“Hee, hee, hee,” he laughed, wanting all other animals to see how he had outwitted the cunning Rabbit.

Lying astride the crocodile’s tongue, the Rabbit held on to the tongue with its paws.

“What an ugly laugh you have,” said the Rabbit to the crocodile. “I bet you can never say Ha, ha, ha!”

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed the foolish crocodile gleefully, opening his mouth wide. Almost at once the Rabbit took a mighty jump forward, forgetting to release his captor’s tongue from its paws. The tongue came tearing out from the crocodile’s mouth.

Ever since that day the crocodile has been without a tongue.



## *The Lion, the Rabbit and the Wren*

**T**HE LION, the king of all animals and birds on land, once went to the seashore. He stood on the beach gazing with wondrous eyes at the vast ocean and the big undulating waves. Slowly he waded into the sea up to his knee.

As he stood there, lost in wonder, there suddenly appeared before him the Naga Dragon, king of water animals, who accused the lion of trespassing on his domain.

“How dare you come here without my permission?”

The lion was taken aback. He had never been spoken to in this manner.

“I don’t require anyone’s permission,” the lion retorted in anger. “Don’t you know I am the king of all animals and birds?”

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"You may be that," replied the Naga Dragon, "but your authority is confined to land. I am the king of water animals and you need my permission to enter my territory."

This led to a violent quarrel, each of them asserting his superiority over the other. Finally it was agreed that this point should be settled by a show of strength and the one who was proved stronger should eat the other. The lion then roared with all his might and a few animals fell down dead. The Dragon in his turn looked askance at some animals and they were burnt to ashes.

"Now, tell me who is stronger," said the Naga Dragon. "You have to roar to kill but I have only to look."

The lion conceded that the Dragon was the stronger of the two, but requested for a few days' respite, so that he could go and say farewell to his family. The Dragon agreed and told him to present himself at the seashore after seven days.

The lion went home with a heavy heart. He could not eat or sleep. His family noticed that he looked morose and stared vacantly into space.

The little Rabbit who lived nearby also noticed the lion's unusual manner. "Why is your Majesty so unhappy?" he asked with concern.

The lion told him about the fight between the Naga Dragon and himself.

The Rabbit said, "Don't worry, your Majesty. I will find a way of saving you," and went off to find the bird-herald.

"Look Herald," said the Rabbit, "you have gone all over the forest on the king's errands. Have you ever met the Galon-bird who eats up dragons?"

"I have heard of him, Wise Rabbit," replied the herald, "but I have never seen him. He is a spirit bird and does not come to our forest."

"Will you be able to find him?"

"It will be difficult. And even if I do, he may refuse to come, for our king has no authority over him," said the herald.

"Very well," said the Rabbit, "in that case we will have to do without him. Will you please tell all the animals and birds to assemble at the seashore on the seventh day from now?"

The bird-herald spread the word round and at sunrise on the seventh day, hundreds of birds and animals gathered at the seashore. The lion came accompanied by the Rabbit.

Then the Rabbit announced: "We have to find the biggest bird in this assembly."

The eagle stepped forward, but the Rabbit shook its head. Then the stork came forward; then the vulture; and then the adjutant-bird. But the Rabbit kept saying "still bigger." Finally a curious-looking bird, thick and square and as big as the elephant, stepped forward.

"Who are you?" asked the Rabbit because nobody had ever seen this strange bird before.

"He is Bird-Big-Blunt-Multicoloured," replied the bird-herald. "He is shy and retiring and keeps very much to himself. He has come here today simply from a sense of loyalty to the king."

The Rabbit was greatly impressed with the Bird-Big-Blunt-Multicoloured and instructed him to hide himself behind a cluster of trees. As soon as the Dragon appeared, continued the Rabbit, the big bird was to flap his

wings and peck with his beak at the trees. All set, the lion was requested to call the Dragon.

The lion roared, and lo! there was the Dragon rising from beneath the gurgling foamy sea.

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed the Dragon on seeing the big gathering of land animals. "So you have come here to be eaten up in royal style!"

Suddenly there was the flap of mighty wings and the peck of a mighty beak. The Dragon who had just spoken in a lofty tone went instantly pale.

"What is that sound?" he asked.

"That is the Galon-bird, my lord," replied the Rabbit. "He is also coming today to witness your...."

Before he could finish the sentence, the Dragon took one big dive and disappeared underneath the turbulent waves.

Then all the animals and all the birds rushed to embrace and kiss the great big bird; so happy and grateful were they that he had saved their king. With each powerful embrace the big bird shrunk in size; till, at last, when all the assembly of birds and animals had kissed and embraced him, the Bird-Big-Blunt-Multicoloured stood before them as the little wren!

From that day onward the big bird has been known as the Bird-kissed-with-the-lips.

## *The Pincers of Pagan*

AT ONE time in Burma there were no disputes between people because everybody behaved strictly according to the rule of the law. Seldom, if ever, were there cases of deception, cheating, breaking contracts and the like. And if such cases did occur, the judges had no difficulty in settling them righteously beyond a shadow of doubt.

Now this remarkable state of affairs was not due to the prevailing law or even the special competence of the king's judges. It was due entirely to a huge pair of Pincers kept in one of the pagodas of Pagan. Whenever a suit was filed in a court, the judges used to bring the parties to the dispute to this pagoda and make each party make his statement holding his hands between the Pincers. If a person made a false statement, the Pincers promptly pinched off his hands. Naturally this had the effect of keeping people on the right path.

Thus it happened once that there was a wealthy merchant who had to go on a long journey. He had some gold which he thought it would be safer to leave behind than carry with him on the perilous journey. So he went to a monastery of which he was one of the patrons and handed a viss (about 4 lbs.) of gold to the lay brother, steward of the monastery, for safe custody.

After the merchant had gone, the lay brother thought to himself, "Why shouldn't I keep this gold for myself? The merchant is rich and has a lot of money. If I keep this gold, it will come in handy for a rainy day."

But how was he to cheat the merchant? If the latter filed a suit against him, the Pincers of Pagan would give him away.

The lay brother thought long and was able at last to think of a clever device. He first melted the viss of gold. Then he hollowed out his staff, poured the molten gold into it, and sealed the opening with wax.

The merchant returned from his journey and went to the monastery after a few days. He met the lay brother and asked him for his gold.

"I have already returned you the gold," said the lay brother.

"When?" asked the puzzled merchant.

"Last time you came."

"But I have only come here today."

The conversation went on in circles, the lay brother insisting that he had returned the gold to its owner and the merchant insisting that he had not.

Utterly disgusted, the merchant went back to his home and brought a suit of cheating against the lay



brother. In accordance with the usual procedure, the judge took the parties to the Pincers.

The merchant, being the plaintiff, had to make his statement first. Holding his hands between the Pincers he said: "I, the plaintiff, say that I entrusted one viss of gold to the lay brother and I say also that the viss of gold has not been returned to me."

\* Such occasions being rare, a crowd of people had come to witness the proceedings. As the merchant made his statement, the people looked intently at the Pincers but nothing happened. The Pincers remained motionless.

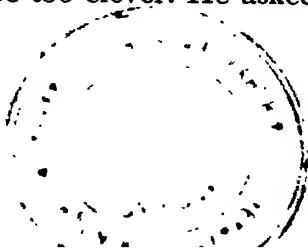
Now the lay brother stepped forward, leaning on his staff. He requested the merchant to hold the staff while he placed his hands between the Pincers for making his statement. The merchant took the staff. Then in measured tones the lay brother said: "I, the defendant, say that the merchant had entrusted a viss of gold to me for safe keeping. I also say that I have returned him the gold which is now with him."

As before the Pincers did not move. The judge was astonished; the crowd was dumbfounded. This was the first time such a thing had happened. What was the mystery?

The excited onlookers however had no patience. To them it seemed that the Pincers had lost their magic.

"After all they are lifeless," said they. "How can they see into the human mind? How can both parties making contradictory statements be true? Throw away the Pincers; they are useless."

But the judge was a wise man. He guessed that one of the men was trying to be too clever. He asked the mer-



chant and the lay brother to make their statements again. This time he watched every detail of the performance.

The judge asked for the staff which he took to his home that evening. There he broke it into pieces. Sure enough, he found the molten gold and understood the lay brother's trick.

But life was never the same again for the judges in Burma. The Pincers lost interest in human affairs and refused to cooperate in the administration of justice. Even if witnesses made grossly false statements, the Pincers would not move.



## *The Eclipse of the Moon*

A N O L D woman lay ill and dying in her little hut. She called her two grandsons to her bedside and said, "My sons, I have no gold or silver to leave to you. But in the kitchen you will find my mortar which is for the elder boy and my pestle which is for the younger." Soon after she died.

Now the elder brother, being the more practical of the two, said to himself, 'What should I do with this mortar? I do not want to be a kitchen servant'. So he did not take it and went away to another village to look for work.

The younger brother was more affectionate and he had great faith in his grandmother. 'Why should she have kept the pestle so carefully if it had no use?' he thought to himself. So he took the pestle and treasured it above all things.

For his living the younger brother gathered firewood

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and sold it in the village market. His pestle was the subject of much laughter among the village folk but he took their remarks without offence.

"Are you afraid that someone will run away with your pestle?" they would say to him. "Who will want to take it? Ha, ha, ha!"

But the boy would simply smile and remain silent.

One day the younger brother had gone as usual to the woods to gather firewood when a big snake suddenly appeared before him. In fright he climbed up a tree. To his amazement he found the snake speaking to him.

"Please do not be afraid of me. I will not harm you. My husband has just died and I want only to borrow your pestle."

"How can my pestle help you?" asked the quivering boy.

"Because it has magical powers. It can bring the dead to life. If you follow me, I shall show you how to use it."

The boy came down and followed the snake to another part of the forest where, to be sure, another big snake lay cold and curled up in a heap. Gripping the pestle in its fangs the snake held it against the dead snake's nostrils and in a few moments the dead body began to stir with life.

Returning the pestle to the owner the snake said, "The power of the pestle is in its smell and as long as you do not tell anyone about it, that power will remain."

The younger brother took back the pestle and started walking towards the village, his mind full of wonder at the day's happenings. On the way he passed by the body of a dog which had been dead for some time and become putrid. He knelt down and held the pestle

against the dog's nose. The animal revived, jumped up and followed the boy, wagging its tail. From that day the dog whom the younger brother named 'Master Putrid' became his faithful servant and companion.

In a short space of time the younger brother achieved fame as a great physician who could restore even the dead to life. From far and near people came to him to be cured. They invariably saw the pestle in his hand but none guessed that it was anything more than a mascot. Then it chanced that the king's only daughter suddenly fell ill and died. The king's messengers hurried to the famous physician who came and restored the princess to life. In gratitude the king offered him his daughter in marriage. Thus the poor boy became a prince and heir to the throne.

One day a strange idea occurred to him. 'If this pestle can bring life to the dead, why should it not be able to prevent age? I must try and explore its properties.'

From that day he made a point of smelling it every-day himself and also making the princess his wife do it.

A few years passed and he noticed that neither he nor the princess had grown old. He had indeed discovered the secret of eternal youth!

But up in the celestial regions, the eternally young and beautiful Moon was despondent for she could not bear to see ordinary mortals attain eternal youth. "Why, even the sun grows old," the Moon said, "every evening at sunset he looks so red and tired and old." So the Moon decided to steal the pestle, come what may.

She had not to wait long for her opportunity. The

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rainy season came when for days at a stretch it was wet and the pestle became damp and covered with mildew. Then one day there was a break in the clouds and the sun shone brightly in the sky. The prince brought out his pestle to dry in the sunshine while he stood beside it to guard it. Presently the princess came out. Seeing her husband guarding the pestle, she said:

"My lord, it is so unbecoming for you to stand like this and dry the pestle. Surely one of the servants could be left to do this job?"

"I can't trust my pestle to anybody."

The princess was persistent.

"All right," he agreed at last, "I shall bring Master Putrid to come and guard it."

The faithful dog came and watched over the pestle. This was just the chance the Moon had been looking for. In broad daylight she came down, her faint light invisible in the brilliance of the sun, and picked up the pestle. The alert Putrid sensed an intruder but could not see anything. He sniffed in different corners and when the Moon began to run away, the dog also ran in the same direction, led by the strong scent of the pestle.

Since that day Master Putrid has been chasing the Moon. At night he can see her but during day he follows the scent to continue the chase. Because he is constantly inhaling the scent of the pestle, the dog has remained eternally youthful. At times he succeeds in catching the Moon and tries to swallow her, but his little throat cannot swallow such a big object; so he has to vomit it out. Then the chase begins all over again.

## *THE ECLIPSE OF THE MOON*

That is why when there is an eclipse of the Moon, the Burmese say, "Master Putrid has caught the Moon," and after the eclipse they say, "The Moon has been vomited out."

## *The Contest of True Tales*

ONCE UPON a time in a certain village there lived four young men who had the gift of making up the most impossible tales ever told. They were good friends and always went about together. On one occasion when they happened to be in the village resthouse they came across a traveller clad in fine clothes.

"He seems to be a rich fellow," they whispered among themselves. "Why don't we swindle him of his clothes?"

They approached the stranger and engaged him in conversation. One friend told him about the village, the other about the forest abounding with wild game. The third friend talked of the river near the fields and the fourth of the mountains far away which they had explored. Said one of them, "Let's have a bet. Let each of us tell the story of his most wonderful adventure and anyone doubting the truth of the story will become the slave of the narrator."

The traveller who had been listening all the while with interest to their talk agreed. The four friends exchanged a meaningful glance as if to say, 'The old fool! How easily we have trapped him!'

They little guessed that the traveller was himself a great story-teller. And what if he was? Even if he did tell an impossible tale, they had only to say that they believed it. On the other hand they knew that their stories would be so incredibly fantastic that the traveller was bound to protest. They would then declare him to have lost the bet and deprive him of his clothes for they had no intention of making him their slave. Thus secure in their self-confidence, the friends went and called the village headman to be the judge in their battle of wits.

The first young man started to relate his adventure.

"When I was about to be born, my mother asked my father to pluck her some plums from the tree growing in front of our house. My father replied that the tree was too high and risky to climb. Then my mother asked my brothers to get her the plums but they also refused. I could not bear to see my mother disappointed. So I quietly slipped out, went up the tree, wrapped the plums in my jacket and when no one was looking, left them on the kitchen table. My mother was extremely happy to see the plums and ate as many of them as she could. Nobody in the family could imagine how the plums came to be there. After they had all had enough, there were still so many plums left over that my mother distributed basketfuls of them among the neighbours and piled the rest high against the front door."

The young men looked at the traveller to see his

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reaction. The latter nodded his head; so did each of them.

It was now the second friend's turn.

"When I was a week old," he began, "I went for a stroll in the forest. There I found a large tamarind tree with ripe tamarinds. Being hungry, I climbed up the tree and ate so many tamarinds that I could not climb down. So I had to go to the village to fetch a ladder and balancing it against the tree, I came down by the ladder."

Again the friends looked hopefully at the traveller, convinced that he could not possibly believe such nonsense. But the stranger nodded his head to signify that he believed the tale. The young men also nodded their heads.

The third man proceeded to narrate his adventure.

"I had my first adventure at a fairly late age. I must have been about a year old when I chased a rabbit into a bush and crawled after it. To my great surprise I found that the rabbit was a tiger which, on seeing me, opened his mouth wide. I told the tiger that it would not be fair on his part to eat me for I was after a rabbit, not a tiger. But the tiger replied that I was too good a prey to be let off. Then he opened his mouth wider to attack but I sprang at him, caught his upper jaw with my left hand and gave it a violent jerk. In a minute the tiger had been split into two and was dead."

Surely, thought the young man, this story would get the old fellow on the hook! But no, the man was nodding his head in approbation, not a flicker of doubt on his face. With defeat writ large in their eyes, the other friends also nodded their heads.



The fourth friend now began his story.

"Last year I took a boat and went fishing. Out in the ocean there were other fishermen too, but the whole day passed and none of us had been able to catch even one fish. Curious to know why such a big river had no catch to offer, I left the boat and dived into the water. Down and down I went and after three days touched the river's bottom. There to my horror I came upon a fish as big as a mountain swallowing all other fishes. Before it could see me, I charged and gave it a mighty blow with my fist. The fish died. Then, as I was hungry, I lit a fire to roast it. When it was cooked, I ate it all up. Then I floated back to the surface of the river and told everybody of my encounter with the giant fish."

The traveller nodded his head vigorously in appreciation of his unique experience. Crestfallen, the three young men also nodded their heads.

Finally the traveller cleared his throat to tell his story.

"Some years ago I had a cotton farm in which there was one very big tree, bright red in colour. For a long time the tree was bare with no branch or leaf, but after some time it had four branches. On each branch grew a bud which blossomed into a big fruit. I plucked the fruits but when I cut them open, a young man jumped out of each fruit. Since the young men were the product of a tree on my farm, you will agree with me that they were legally my slaves."

His listeners agreed that it was so.

"Well then," continued the traveller, "I put them to work on the farm. I soon discovered that they were lazy and would not work except under my supervision."

One day I had to go out on business and when I returned in the evening, I learnt that the fellows had run away. Since then I have been looking for them everywhere. How lucky for me that I should have found you at last! Young men, come back to my farm. You know that you are my slaves."

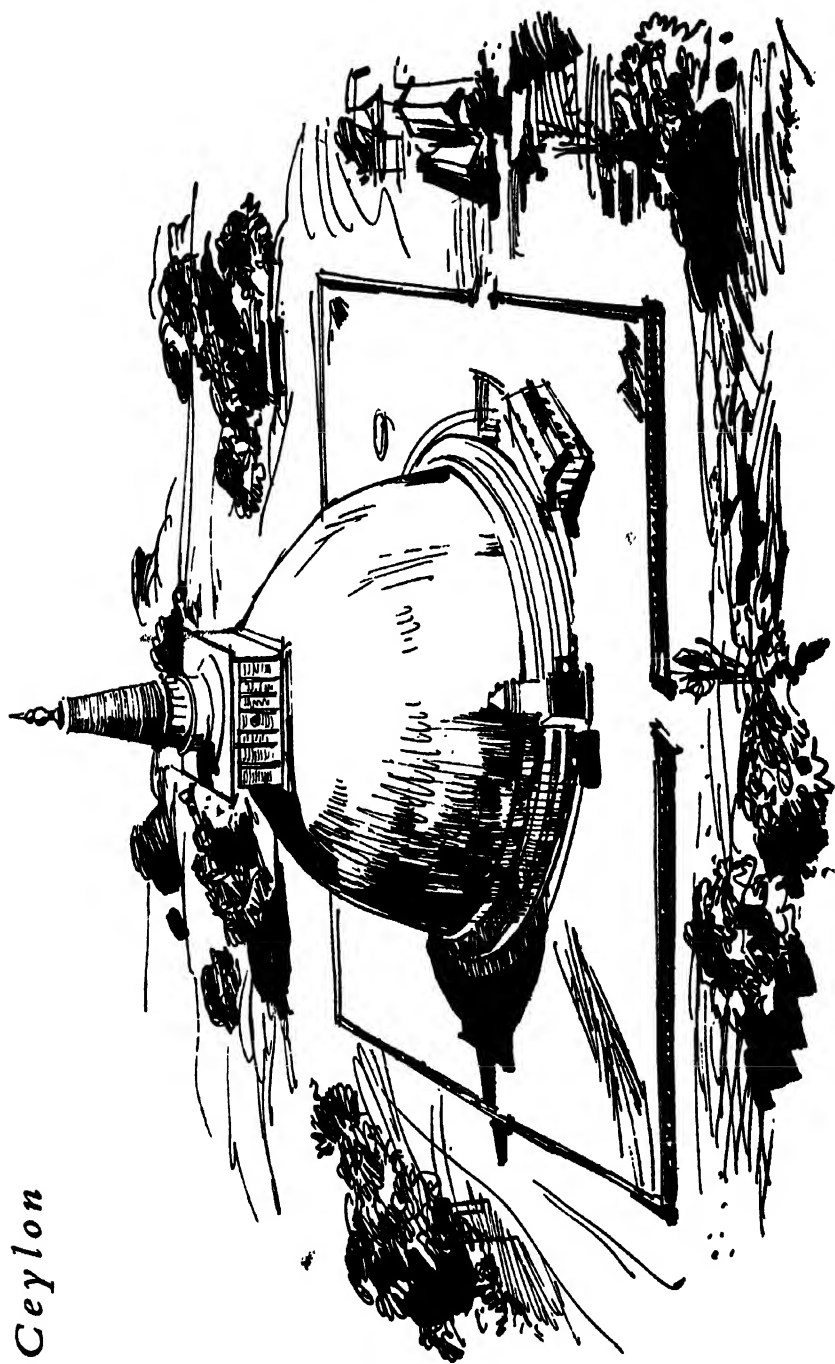
The young men looked disbelievingly at one another. They had been outwitted and driven into a corner. If they said they believed the story, it would mean admitting that they were his runaway slaves. If they said they did not believe the story, they would become his slaves according to the terms of the bet.

So they remained mute, with heads hung down in shame. The headman declared that the traveller had won the bet.

"Young men, I do not want you," said the stranger, vastly amused at their discomfiture. "If you give me your clothes, I shall grant you your freedom."

The four friends surrendered their clothes which the traveller tied up in a neat bundle and then continued his journey. .

*Ceylon*





## *The Deer and its Friends*

AN UNPRECEDENTED drought had struck the land. For three years continuously there had been no rain and the forest which was once thick and luxuriant with trees wore the look of wilderness. The panic-stricken animals of the jungle died of thirst one after the other.

At this time a young deer, separated from its group, was wandering about when it spotted a rock-hole in which there was water. The deer stopped and had a drink. Then it bent its footsteps homeward.

On the way it met with a crow.

"My friend," said the crow, "how do you manage to look so well? I haven't had a drop of water for days."

"There is a rock-hole with water," replied the deer and told him how to find his way to it.

The crow flew to the spot as directed, had a drink and came back to join the deer. As they walked along

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

they came across a woodpecker; farther down they met a turtle; and still farther down a jackal. The deer told each of them about the rock-hole and how to reach there.

From that day the five of them became friends, going daily together to the rock-hole to drink water. One day, as they were going, a Veddah<sup>1</sup> chanced to see them and his eyes fell longingly on the beautiful deer. "I wish I could catch it!" thought the Veddah and came later in the day to spread a deer-hide noose for the purpose.

Next day the deer was caught in the noose. The crow, the woodpecker and the turtle tried everything to free the deer but without success. At last they appealed to the jackal who had just stood observing the scene to bite the noose.

"How can I bite into this hard fold?" replied the jackal, who was thinking that if the deer got killed, he could eat a portion of it. "My teeth are shaking."

"You are telling a lie," said the crow.

"Have you forgotten that it was the deer who told us where to find water and thus saved us from dying?" cried the woodpecker.

"You will come to no good with your evil intentions," said the turtle.

But the jackal was unmoved. He lay down in a corner under a tree, feigning illness.

The crow, the woodpecker and the turtle got together to plan a stratagem. Since it was already evening and the Veddah was nowhere in sight, they guessed that he would not be coming till the next day. So they planned

<sup>1</sup> The Veddahs are the original inhabitants of Ceylon.

that the turtle should stay behind to bite the cord throughout the night while the crow and the woodpecker were to fly over to the Veddah's house to keep a watch on his movements.

The following morning the Veddah made preparations to go and look for his prey. At dawn he rose and said to his wife, "Bolan,<sup>1</sup> give me a packet of cooked rice. I must go and see if the deer has been caught in the noose I set for him yesterday."

Just at that moment the woodpecker cried out, perched just above the Veddah's front door.

"Did you hear the woodpecker's cry?" said the Veddah. "That is an evil omen. I will wait for some time."

One hour passed. The rice was cooked and packed and the Veddah was ready to leave. As he stepped out, the woodpecker cried out again.

The Veddah went back. "I will wait a little longer," he said to his wife.

Another hour passed. The sun had come up in the sky and it was a long way to go to the rock-hole. The Veddah picked up his packet of rice and his axe and set out. The woodpecker cried itself hoarse but this time the Veddah did not turn back.

Then the woodpecker and the crow flew over to the spot where the jackal was still lying down as if in pain. They entreated him to save the deer but the greedy animal was deaf to all persuasions.

The Veddah arrived and his heart leapt to see that the deer had been caught. He hung up his packet of rice on a tree, and taking his axe he started to walk

<sup>1</sup> A form of expression used to address people.

towards the noose. He had barely walked a few paces when the crow dived over his head and tore open the packet of rice. The Veddah ran back to save the rice and the crow flew away.

Removing the rice beneath another tree, the Veddah went towards the deer again. He disentangled the noose from the deer and was about to lift his axe when the crow brushed past his shoulder and tore open the packet of rice. In exasperation the man flung the axe at the crow. Instead of striking the crow it fell heavily on the jackal who died instantly.

Freed from the noose the deer bounded away. After a time he was joined by his three friends, the crow, the woodpecker and the turtle.

The disappointed Veddah looked around him and said, "Was it the deer that I got or the packet of cooked rice that I got?"



## *The Gamarala and the Washerman*

ONCE UPON a time there were two neighbours, a Gamarala<sup>1</sup> and a Washerman, who decided to work together to cut a chena.<sup>2</sup> One day as they were cutting the chena, a jungle-cock crowed. The shrill piercing cry fell sharply on their ears.

"Please catch that crowing jungle-cock," said the Gamarala to the Washerman. "I cannot work with that crowing in my ears."

"Will you do the chena work until I catch the jungle-cock and come again?" asked the Washerman.

"Yes, I will."

The Washerman was a lazy fellow and this gave him

<sup>1</sup> A peasant.

<sup>2</sup> Jungle land used for shifting cultivation.

just the excuse he wanted to get away from work. Leaving the Gamarala with the chena he went straight home and stayed there. Only when the chena work was done did he go after the jungle-cock and catch it.

Then he went to the Gamarala to claim his share of the chena.

"You have not worked. I will not give you any share," said the Gamarala.

Thereupon the Washerman instituted a law-suit against his neighbour.

On the day the case was to be heard, the Washerman borrowed a cloth from the Gamarala and wrapped it round himself while going to the court-room. The Gamarala was the first to present his case. After he had finished, the judge turned to the Washerman and asked if he had anything to say

"What have I to say?" the Washerman replied in a resigned tone of voice. "The Gamarala will say next that this cloth which I am wearing is his."

"It is mine, indeed!" broke in the Gamarala.

"There! What did I say, my lord?" said the Washerman. "Was it necessary for me to borrow a cloth from him? Am I without clothes to that extent?"

Convinced of the Washerman's reasonableness, the judge gave the verdict that the two men divide the chena equally between themselves. They did so.

The Gamarala was a simple, forgiving man, incapable of harbouring resentment against anyone for long. So after sometime, at the suggestion of the Washerman, the two men sowed a paddy field together. To avoid conflict they made the division at the very beginning.

"Of the paddy plants in the field I will take the things

above the ground and you take the things below the ground," said the Washerman.

"I agree," replied the other.

Thus when the crop ripened and they threshed it, the Washerman took the paddy. Below the earth the Gamarala dug and dug but there was nothing he could find.

• Next they planted onions. Now the agreement was reversed because the Gamarala insisted that he would have the takings above the ground. With reluctance the Washerman agreed.

When the crop was ready, the Gamarala cut off the onion stumps and heaped them high in his backyard. The Washerman dug up and got the onions.

Seeing that he always got the wrong end of the bargain, the Gamarala thought that he would build a house of his own entirely by himself. "I will not build it with the other fellow," he said. So he went to the forest and cut down Waewarana, Kaetakala, Milla and Kolon trees.<sup>1</sup> Day after day he made his way to the woods, working ceaselessly from morning to evening and got together enough material for a house. Then he waited for an auspicious day on which to begin work.

The Washerman also decided to build a house. He went to the jungle and cut Paepol, Eramudu, and Nurunga trees.<sup>2</sup> A few days later the Gamarala's wife was going past his house. Immediately the Washerman took the Naekat Pota<sup>3</sup> and leaning against the door, read aloud, "For a house of Waewarana, for a house

<sup>1</sup> Good timber trees commonly used in the construction of houses.

<sup>2</sup> All these are soft woods quite useless for any kind of building work.

<sup>3</sup> An astrological book dealing with prognostications.

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

of Kaetakala, quarrel; for a house of Milla, hanging; for a house of Eramudu, purity; for a house of Paepol, land."

Shocked out of her wits the Gamarala's wife retraced her steps back and said to her husband, "You have done a foolish thing again. We shall have only sickness and trouble if we build the house with the trees you have collected. In the Naekat Pota it is so written. If we use the trees that the Washerman has cut, we shall be fortunate."

Without asking questions or making any inquiry the Gamarala went to the Washerman and persuaded him to exchange trees with him.

"All right," said the Washerman. "I have a kind heart."

Thus the Washerman built himself a good house. The trees which the Gamarala got were of no use to him. He could not build; so he continued to live in the same old house he had.

## *The Kadambawa Men and the Dream*

A GROUP OF men from Kadambawa were journeying together to Puttalam. They had started from their village in the early morning, hoping to reach their destination before nightfall. But the journey was long and when darkness fell they were still a considerable distance away from Puttalam. So they sought a resting place and having cooked and eaten, they retired for the night.

One of the men had a dream. He dreamt that he was lost in a thick dark jungle. The branches of its trees spread like umbrellas shutting out all light. As he groped for his way a big tusk elephant appeared before him. It advanced nearer—and nearer with a heavy tread, waving its trunk and flapping its big ears. The man was seized with fright. He screamed....

## **TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS**

He woke up in a pool of perspiration. Others woke up too, startled by the scream and came running towards him.

"What is it?" they cried.

"I saw a huge elephant," said the man, shaking and nervous.

The men ran to fetch their sticks.

"Where is it?" they asked.

"I saw the tusk elephant in my dream."

"Oh," said the men and went back to sleep.

The following morning all of them sat together and listened to the man relating his dream.

"Friends, it was an evil dream. A tusk elephant is not a good omen."

"What is the meaning?" they queried.

Then the men began to interpret the dream.

"If there is a tusk elephant, there will be elephant's dung."

"If there is elephant's dung, it means there is paddy which the elephant has eaten."

"Paddy means uncooked rice."

"If there's uncooked rice, it means also there is cooked rice."

"Cooked rice is a thing found only in the village."

"The village means our homes. Something must have happened since we left."

"It is useless for us to go on when a tragedy has befallen our homes," said the men. "Let us go back to the village and see what has happened."

The thought of the tragedy brought tears to their eyes. Weeping their hearts out they bent their steps homeward to the village.

## *THE KADAMBAWA MEN AND THE DREAM*

By evening they were near their rice fields. The boys of the village were roaming the countryside while the women were sitting outside their homes, sewing and talking. They heard the mournful cries of men and started running helter-skelter in panic.

"Our men are coming back crying. A dreadful thing must have happened."

\*Tears rushed to their eyes and crying aloud they went to meet the men across the fields.

Seeing the weeping women and boys, the man who had had the dream said, "Look there! Did I not tell you that something must have happened?"

So the men cried more and hearing their wails, the women ~~and~~ boys cried more and sobbed. In this state the two parties stood facing each other across the fields, saying nothing but crying louder and louder.

Thus it became night. A stranger from another village was passing by and hearing the weird uproar, he came to see what was wrong.

"Who is dead?" he asked, addressing the men.

"We don't know who is dead," said the men and cried more at the thought of someone being dead.

Then the stranger went over to the other side and asked the women, "Why are you crying? Who is dead?"

"We don't know who is dead," they replied.

The man then told both parties to stop crying. "Why are you crying? Nothing dreadful has happened. Why don't you find out?"

Then the men came over from across the fields and when they found that nothing had happened, they were happy and dispersed to their homes.

## *The Three Questions*

A TRAVELLER FROM a far-off kingdom was passing through a certain country. In the course of his wanderings he met a man who had lived long in that country and was well informed about things in general. While conversing on various matters the traveller asked, "Is your king a good ruler?"

"He does not seem to have any faults," replied the man. "If he is a wise man," said the traveller, "he should know the centre of this country, the number of stars in the sky, and the work which the king of the Devas<sup>1</sup> does."

A few days later the man came to the palace seeking an audience with the king. In the royal presence he repeated the three questions posed by the traveller.

The king was puzzled and he sent for the Ratemahatmayas who were the highest provincial chiefs in

<sup>1</sup> Devas means gods. The king of the Devas is Indra.



the realm to assist him in finding the answers. The chiefs came, but try as they would, they were unable to give the answers. The king lost his temper and commanded that the chiefs be beheaded. The royal order was carried out without delay.

Next the king ordered his ministers, the Adikaramas, to be brought before him. Like the chiefs they pondered deeply over the three questions but failed to find the answers. The king's anger had reached such a pitch that he commanded them to be beheaded. The order was carried out promptly.

The Royal Preceptor<sup>1</sup> was now summoned to the palace. Having heard of the king's state of mind and the summary executions just carried out, he was nervous and his legs shook as he came before the king. However, when the questions were put to him he had the presence of mind to say, "Your Majesty, these questions require inner perception. If you give me just one day, I shall be able to tell you the answers."

"You may take one day," said the king. "But if you cannot give me the answers tomorrow, you will be beheaded."

The Royal Preceptor returned to his house, deep in thought and his mind weighed with foreboding. His voice stuck in his throat and he threw himself on the bed in despair.

At that time the lad who looked after the Royal Preceptor's goats came, and seeing his master in this unusual state, asked, "Sir, why are you lying down?"

"The chieftains and the ministers were beheaded today. Tomorrow is my turn."

<sup>1</sup> The king's spiritual adviser.

"May I know the reasons, sir?"

"I have been asked to say which is the centre of the country; how many stars are there in the sky; and what work does the god of the Devas do. If I cannot answer these questions, I shall be beheaded."

"In that case, my lord," said the youth, "you must stop worrying. If you take me with you, I shall answer these questions."

Next morning the Royal Preceptor accompanied by the goatherd went to the palace. The king received them in the audience hall.

"Have you found the answers?" queried the king addressing the Royal Preceptor.

"What is there in these questions to answer? Even the youth who looks after my goats can answer them. I have brought him here with me," replied the Preceptor.

The youth stepped forward amidst hundreds of eyes watching him intently. Then the king spoke to him.

"Do you know the centre of the country?"

The youth fixed a stick in the ground and pointed his finger to it. "Behold! Here is the centre of one's country. Measure the distance from the four quarters, and if the account is not correct, be good enough to behead me."

The king was satisfied with the reply and now posed the second question.

"Can you tell me the number of stars in the sky?"

In reply the youth threw down on the ground the goatskin he was wearing.

"Count these hairs, and count the stars in the sky. If the numbers are not equal, be good enough to behead me."

The king was pleased with the reply and finally repeated the third question.

"Now tell me what work does the god of the Devas do?"

"I cannot answer this question thus," replied the youth.

"Then how will you answer it?"

•The youth said, "You must first decorate me with the royal insignia, put the crown on my head, give the sword in my hands, and place me on the Lion-throne. Only then will I answer."

Thereupon the king ordered that the boy be bathed, decorated and placed upon the Lion-throne.

Ascending the throne, the newly crowned king called the executioners and said to them, "Take that tyrant away and cast him out! He has had so many innocent people beheaded." Turning to the former king he said, "Behold! That, indeed, is the work which the god of the Devas does."

Thus was the country rid of the foolish king. For his superior wisdom the youth was invested with sovereignty and he ruled the kingdom together with the Royal Preceptor for many a long year.

## *The Three-Cornered Hatter*

ONE SUMMER day a poor man, barefoot and clad in tattered clothes, was driving a young bull along a long, lonely road. He had obtained this bull from a friend and was bound for the next village to sell it for a good price. As he plodded on he came across three young men on the way.

"Where are you taking this goat?" asked one young man.

"This is a bull," replied the poor man. "I am taking it to the market to sell it."

"What!" exclaimed the three young men looking at each other with raised eyebrows. "He calls his goat a bull!"

"Yes, it is a young bull," the poor man explained.

"Do you think we are fools?" said one of the three men. "Can we not make out a goat from a bull? You

have been cheated. This goat is not worth more than three rupees."

"We will give you four rupees for it," said another young man.

Seeing that the three young men would not let him proceed further, he parted with the bull for four rupees. After they had gone, he stood a long while lost in thought. He knew that he had been cheated. "Well," he thought to himself, "I will get even with those rascals."

Quickening his steps he soon caught up with the three clever men. "Friends, I have come to join you. You have been very kind to me."

The young men thought that it would be very profitable for them to have this simpleton around. So they agreed to take him along.

For some time things went well because the poor man worked hard and made life exceedingly comfortable for his young companions. Then, one day he went and got himself a peculiar hat—a hat with three sharp corners. He put it on his head.

When the three young men saw the hat they burst out laughing. "What a funny hat! This is the first time we have seen such a hat. Ha, ha, ha," they laughed, holding their sides.

"Friends, if you knew the facts about this hat, you would not speak about it in this manner," replied the poor man.

"Well, tell us the facts."

"By this hat," explained the hat-owner gravely, "I can obtain food and drink at any place I like. By its power I can do anything I think of. I will not part with it for any price."

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

The young men were incredulous. "What a story! Will you show us its power?"

"Tomorrow I shall show you the power of my hat."

That day the three-cornered hatter went to three eating-houses in the village and told them that he would be bringing with him three friends for food the following day. "You must treat us well. Take the money for it today."

On the morrow the four men set out together for their midday meal. At the eating-house they were received with deference and escorted to a table elaborately laid with the choicest dishes and drink. At the end of the meal they were served with cheroots. When they got up to go the men of the eating-house bowed to the three-cornered hatter and said, "When you come this way again, sir, don't go away without coming here."

At tea-time they went to another eating-house. Here also they were treated with the utmost cordiality and given plenty to eat. Likewise at night they visited a third eating-house where they ate and drank to their heart's content and at the time of leaving the three-cornered hatter was requested to come again. At no place were they asked to pay for what they had eaten.

The three clever men were stupefied. They eyed the hat almost with reverence and begged their companion for it. "Please take all our goods for it," they pleaded.

The three-cornered hatter was reluctant. He would not part with the hat. After much persuasion he relented and said, "This hat has protected my life. Since you have been so kind to me I shall give you the hat. Please take good care of it." He then tied up all their goods in bundles and took his leave.

Next day the three young men, carrying the three-cornered hat, went to the eating-house which they had visited the previous day. After they had finished their meal, they got up to leave.

"Where is the money?" asked the men of the eating-house.

"What money?" The young men looked completely bewildered.

"Look at these foolish men," said the onlookers. "They have just had their food and are now leaving without paying for it."

To avoid embarrassment the young men paid and came out. Then they started quarrelling among themselves.

"You idiot, you should wear the hat. It is not to be carried in the hand," they said to the one holding the hat.

In the evening they went to another eating-house. This time the earlier mistake was rectified; one of them was wearing the three-cornered hat. They ate and drank and having finished, rose to leave. As they were approaching the door, a man came running from behind and caught hold of the man wearing the hat.

"Where is the money for all that you have eaten?"

"What money?" they asked.

"You thieves! You cheats!" There was a general uproar as the men of the eating-house besieged the three men, beat them hard, and pushed them out.

With aching limbs they walked back to their house. Now they knew that the three-cornered hatter had cheated them in the same way they had cheated him of his bull. "We are ruined," they cried and wept in distress.

## *Five Lies Quite Like Truth*

A KING STOOD at the window looking out on the green landscape stretching far into the distance. He breathed the cool fragrant air of spring but his eyes had an unseeing look. He felt bored and listless.

After a time he sent for his minister.

"Tell me a story," said the king.

"What sort of a story would you like to hear, Sire?" asked the minister.

The king thought and replied, "I want you to tell me five tales so closely resembling the truth that I should believe them."

The reply completely baffled the minister. He thought of the various stories he knew but none of these answered the king's description. The more he thought the more confused he became. At last he said, "Your Majesty, give me one day to think."



The king agreed but warned him that if his story did not satisfy the royal whim, the minister would be beheaded.

With a sinking heart the minister went home and lay down on his bed. He thought long and hard but even after hours of reflection he could not think of a story likely to please the king. His wife came and asked him to have his food.

"What has a dying man to do with eating and drinking?" he replied and told her what the king had said.

"Don't worry," his wife said, "I shall tell you the story which the king will believe."

After persuading him to get up and eat she related to him the following story:

"In a certain country there were four friends, a carpenter, a goldsmith, an areca-nut seller and a dried-fish seller. One day they decided to go to another city and trade, and for that purpose they requested the carpenter to build them a ship.

When the ship was ready, the four men wished to engage a servant who would cook for them on board the ship. They made enquiries from several people for a good cook but had difficulty in finding one. At last they came across a youth who lived with his old adopted mother named Hokki. The youth was willing to go; and it was further agreed that his mother would accompany him since there was no one else to look after her.

One fine day they all sailed away, the goldsmith taking a number of hairpins for sale, the areca-nut seller taking *puwak* (arecanuts) and the dried-fish seller taking *karawala* (sun-dried fish).

For some days the voyage was smooth and pleasant

and the friends were buoyant with hope, eagerly looking forward to their destination. Suddenly the weather changed; it grew windy and the sea became rough. The boat tossed violently from side to side and ran on a rock. It was totally wrecked and all the party were drowned.

Some years passed and then they were reborn. In his next life the carpenter became a Barbet which bores holes in trees, looking for a good tree with which to build a ship.

The goldsmith became a Mosquito which always hums near the ears asking for the hairpins that he lost.

The dried-fish seller became a Darter and constantly searches for his dried fish in the water.

The areca-nut seller became a Water-hen<sup>1</sup> and every morning calls out "puwak! puwak!" for his lost areca-nuts.

And the youth who was cook became a Jackal who still cries for his mother "Hokki' hoya hoya."<sup>2</sup>

Next morning the minister went to the palace and told the story to the king who was so absorbed in it that as the minister came to the last part, the king repeated after him, "puwak! puwak! Hokki' hoya hoya."

When the story was finished the minister said, "Sire, what I have told you is a story, not a fact. Isn't that what you wanted?"

The king woke up from his reverie with a start and he remembered the incident of the previous day. He then congratulated the minister for his gift of imagination and conferred many royal favours on him.

<sup>1</sup> It is called *Kapparakata* by the Sinhalese.

<sup>2</sup> The beginning of the jackal's howl.

## *The Jackal's Decision*

CROCODILES ARE usually to be found in rivers but it happened once that in a village there was a tank where a crocodile had made a burrow in the foot of the embankment and was staying in it. After sometime the mud dried and became hard and the crocodile was unable to get out of the hole. With all its force it pushed against the hardened soil but in vain. It was going to die.

At that critical moment the crocodile heard the footsteps of a passer-by and called out.

"Please help me! Help me!"

"Who is it?" asked the astonished passer-by who could see nothing around him.

The same frightened voice came again. "I am caught in this hole. Save me by breaking up the earth so that I may get out."

The man stopped, broke up the earth and let the

crocodile out. Seeing that the tank was without water, he lifted the feeble reptile on his shoulder and walked to the river. As he was placing it down in the water, the latter seized his arm.

"What! Are you going to eat me?" asked the incredulous man, hardly able to believe what he saw. "Have I not just helped you?"

"You have indeed helped me," replied the crocodile, "but I am hungry and so I must eat you."

"This is a fine way of repaying a man for his kindness! If you eat me, it will be so unjust that hereafter nobody will help anyone in distress. I beseech you that before you eat me, let us go and ask some persons about it."

The crocodile agreed and both of them went along to a Kumbuk tree<sup>1</sup> to whom they related the details of the case.

The man said, "This crocodile was going to die. I saved it. It is now going to eat me. Is that right?"

The Kumbuk tree stood silent, its leaves stirring mournfully. Then it spoke to the crocodile, "Do not let that man go. There is no creature so wicked as that man. He rests in the shade of a tree and then breaks off its bark and leaves. Finally he cuts down and takes the tree."

From there they went to a cow grazing on a patch of green grass.

"O Cow, I saved this crocodile from death. It is now going to eat me. Do you think it right?"

The cow looked sadly out of its big gentle eyes as if weighed with many sorrows and replied, "O Crocodile-cultivator, man is the most ungrateful creature. He takes our milk and then kills and eats us."

<sup>1</sup> *Terminalia glabra*.

Dejected, the man was about to turn back when they saw a jackal coming along towards them.

"O Jackal-artificer," called the man, "what is your opinion in this matter? I saved this crocodile from death and it is now going to eat me."

The jackal said, "Without seeing things for myself I cannot give my opinion. How was the crocodile dying?"

The man related the whole incident, but the jackal shook his head.

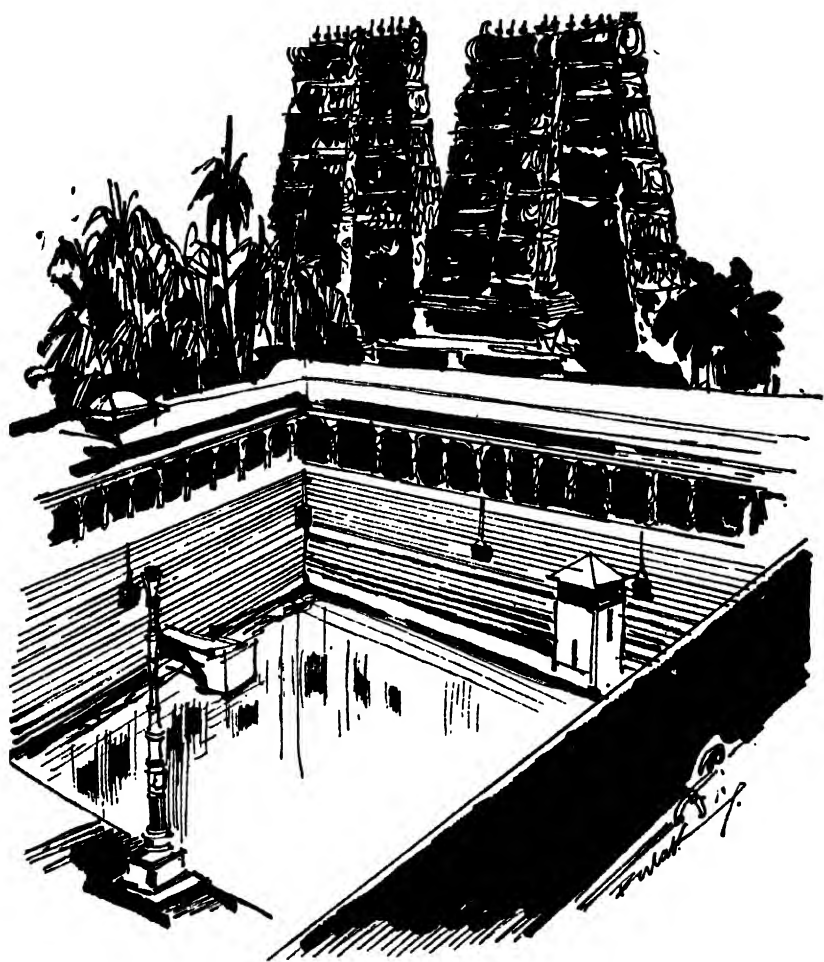
"I cannot imagine how the crocodile could have got into a hole. You must show me the whole thing from the beginning."

Then the man shouldered the crocodile, carried it to the tank, and put it back in the burrow, closing the entrance with the mud. When the reptile was laid securely within, the man said, "You have seen the case exactly as it happened."

"Don't be afraid," replied the jackal. "I am both the judge and the witness. Before it can waylay other innocent prey, take a cudgel and beat it till it dies."



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## *The Stupid Monkeys*

ONCE UPON a time there lived a king called Brahmadata. He was a great king and his kingdom was wide. To the south it touched the land of Lanka. To the north it touched the Himalaya mountains.

King Brahmadata was great in every sense of the word. When he celebrated his winning in war or his deeds in peace, he reached out his hand to every subject in his land, whether he was high or low, rich or poor.

It was the festival of Holi—a great day in the year for the people. On this day King Brahmadata proclaimed a general feast to which every subject of his kingdom was invited.

Now in the king's palace garden, which was filled with colourful flowers and trees, stood a gardener. He looked very glum. It was evening time and the sky was lit up with the glow of the setting sun. Crowds of people,

dressed gaily in their best clothes, were streaming towards the palace. The gardener sighed because he could not go too. There was nobody at hand to look after the garden if he should go away.

As he looked around him, his eye fell on a monkey who lived not far away. The monkey was perched on a tree-top, looking at him. And as they had seen each other quite often, they smiled. The monkey jumped down and came forward to speak.

"Why, friend, what is the matter? Why do you look so downcast? Is there anything I can do to help you?" asked the monkey.

"Alas, you cannot, for you are only a monkey," replied the gardener.

"Still, let me know," insisted the monkey.

"There is a feast at the royal palace. But I cannot go because there is nobody I can leave to take care of the garden," explained the gardener.

"Is that all?" cried the monkey. "I could easily manage that. And not only that, I shall go and fetch a whole crowd of fellow monkeys. They will help me water the plants. So when you come back from the feast, excited and tired, you will find your work all done for you."

The gardener was happy and off he went to the feast. The monkey went out and called his friends. Soon the palace garden was full of monkeys.

At once they set to work. With watering cans in their hands they went around watering the plants. Suddenly a bright idea struck one.

"How much water shall I give this plant? It looks so big. Surely it will need more water."

"Yes," echoed others with one voice. "How much water for each plant? For some are small and some are big."

"Well," replied the oldest of them. "We must decide that by the size of their roots."

"But how shall we know how big the roots are?"

"Very simple," replied the monkey. "Pull out the plant from the earth and see how big its root is."

So the monkeys proceeded about their work, pulling out each plant from its bed. Then they would water it according to the length of its root.

In two hours the whole garden was bare, with plants all rooted out from the earth. Flowers lay strewn about, broken and dead. The gardener returned to find himself a ruined man. His work of years had been undone in a few hours, simply by the foolishness of those who did harm where they sought to do good.

That is why wise people say, "Never leave your work to fools. They may not mean to do harm, but they do not know the good from the bad. Like the monkeys, they try to help. But like them, they destroy."

## *The Brahmin's Goat*

*I*N A DENSE forest at the foot of the Himalayas, there lived a Brahmin named Bapa. He was a devout and kindly soul. He had renounced the world at an early age and had come to practise yoga in that isolated place of peace and quiet. The divinity he worshipped was the goddess of fire.

One day he decided to make an offering to his goddess. It was a cool and cloudy day in summer and he walked a few miles to the neighbouring town to buy a goat.

The shopkeeper gave him a nice plump goat. The Brahmin flung it across his shoulder and set forth on his return journey, humming a tune as he walked. Left and right he looked not, for today he felt like a king.

In this state of supreme bliss the Brahmin did not see three rogues emerge from a wayside thicket and quickly disappear into it again.

Now the three rogues who had seen him, came toge-

ther and decided that the big fat goat the Brahmin was carrying was a big temptation.

"It's a pity to see such a prize wasted on that pious fool," said one.

"A thousand pities," sighed the other.

"Then let's think of some way to take it," suggested the third.

"He is a Brahmin," said the first, "and the best way to get the goat is to play on his weakness."

"And what is that weakness?"

"His piety."

"Yes, let's dupe him," cried all together.

They ran ahead of him and dispersed in different directions. When the Brahmin had walked a mile, he met a respectable-looking man who stared at him in mute surprise.

"Why does the man stare at me?" said the Brahmin to himself. Unable to restrain his curiosity, he asked, "Why, friend, why do you look at me in such a queer way?"

The man quickly looked away. Then, half embarrassed, half apologetic, he said, "Panditji, from your garb you look like a Brahmin. Yet you carry so unclean an animal on your shoulder. What indeed could you have to do with a dog?"

"A dog, indeed," replied the Brahmin indignantly; "can't you see that what I carry on my shoulder is a goat and not a dog? It is an offering for my goddess."

"Forgive me," said the stranger, "I made a mistake."

Bapa walked another mile and met another stranger, the second rogue. Again he saw that the man looked at him with that blank, rather strange look.

"Why do you look at me so?" asked Bapa.

"From your looks I can see you are a holy one. Yet you carry that cat on your shoulder. Why do you defile yourself thus?"

"Are you blind?" cried the Brahmin in a rage; "don't you see that it is a goat, and not a cat?"

"I am sorry," replied the rogue. "It seemed a funny animal."

The Brahmin journeyed a little further and now he met the third rogue. Seeing him, the rogue rubbed his eyes and he rubbed them hard again. Then, still unbelieving, he tried to touch the animal on Bapa's shoulder.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Bapa.

"Pious one, I see an unclean ass upon your shoulder and I cannot believe my eyes."

This time the Brahmin did not fly into a rage. "Probably I have been cheated," he said to himself. "If it is changing its form every now and again, it must be a goblin."

Quickly he threw the animal on the ground and ran as fast as he could go. The rogues rushed in from the other side, laughing heartily, and made ready for a big feast.

## *Greed is a Bad Ally*

**P**RADYOTA, KING of Avanti, was an ambitious monarch. He had waged many wars and extended his dominions far and wide but his greed for more ever increased. Whenever he heard of a new kingdom, he wanted to conquer it.

One evening he was strolling in his garden, bored and listless. So he sent for his chief minister and asked him to regale him with stories of the past and the present—the glory and pomp of olden days, of monarchs of other kingdoms who ruled in splendour.

The minister talked. Hours slipped by and the king listened with rapture to the stories of battles and glorious conquests.

“And, Maharaj, the present ruler of this ancient kingdom of the Vatsas is Udayana who excels even his ancestors in heroism and bravery. He is a mighty king, loved by his subjects and respected by all. Tales about

him are many and he himself is nothing short of a legend."

"Stop," cried the king; "who is this Udayana that people should dare to praise him so, even to my face. I shall conquer him and this very day I shall begin to make my plans."

"Sire, the king himself is a learned sage. He tames elephants by virtue of a secret spell which is known to him alone. Our entire warfare is by elephants. Should he happen to exercise that spell over our elephants on the battlefield, we will be completely routed."

Pradyota seethed with anger. He resolved that he would vanquish his adversary in the open and prove that Pradyota was stronger than Udayana. But to do that, he must first contrive to learn that spell. And to get that he must get hold of Udayana himself.

Thus reflecting, he had it proclaimed throughout his kingdom that he would give a prize of ten thousand gold mohurs to the person who brought Udayana, bound hand and foot, before him.

Ten days later Udayana stood before Pradyota, but not in chains. A prey to false friendship, he had come to Pradyota's kingdom, thinking he was to be his guest, when suddenly at the palace gates he found himself seized by the king's guards. But even there, he refused to bend his knee. With supreme disdain, in the assembly of Pradyota, he declared that the means employed for his capture were not worthy of kings.

"Throw him into the dungeon," cried the infuriated Pradyota.

Of what avail was it to imprison Udayana? The King of Avanti wanted to get the spell, not to keep Udayana



indefinitely with him. On his part Udayana would not part with it. Threats, flattery, persuasion had no effect on him.

"All right," said Udayana, changing his mind one day, and the people thought he must have gone really mad. "I shall teach it to the daughter of the king."

Pradyota lost no time over it. He sent for his daughter and told her about the arrangement.

"My daughter, learn every word, every detail of it well. My fate hangs upon it," he said.

However, there was one drawback to this arrangement. And that was the possibility that Udayana and Vasavadatta, which was the princess's name, might fall in love. Pradyota wished to avoid that at any cost.

So he fixed a screen between them and told Udayana that his pupil was a hunchback. To his daughter he said that her teacher was a leper. This, he assured himself, would keep them well apart.

Lessons began and the arrangement worked well for some days. The princess was an intelligent student, Udayana a willing teacher. What a pity, each told himself and herself, that the other was such an unsightly deformity!

One day the princess was in a temper because she had quarrelled with her mother. When she came for her daily lesson, she fretted and fumed and mispronounced every word that Udayana was saying. At last Udayana lost patience.

"You hunchback, I don't know why I undertook to teach you? I should have known you'd be a blockhead."

The princess was furious. "How dare you call me a

hunchback, you leper. Shut up or I'll have you thrown out by my servants."

The same instant both lifted the screen and lo! what did they behold? Instead of a hunchback, there was a beautiful girl, regal and enchanting. Facing her stood a man, peerless in looks as he was in intelligence.

That was the beginning of the end. Next day Udayana and Vasavadatta were nowhere to be seen. By the time King Pradyota's guards had looked and searched and guessed what had happened, the two runaways had crossed the boundary of Pradyota's dominions and reached where none could touch them.

In his palace Pradyota sat in thought, a lone figure in the gathering dusk, pondering how Udayana had won even in captivity.

## *Nala and Damayanti*

**L**ONG LONG ago in the city of Vidarbha, there ruled a king named Bhima. He was a great monarch, renowned for his valour in war, and his generosity and justice in peace. He had everything—a magnificent court, splendid palaces and gardens, and the love and esteem of his people. Yes, he had everything except one thing—and that was, King Bhima had no children.

This made the king and his royal consort very unhappy. Their fervent prayers and offerings, imploring divine mercy to grant them a child, proved of little avail. Years passed. The king and queen remained without a child.

Then, one day a learned sanyasi came to their city and it was whispered about him that he had the power to grant what people wished for. Hearing of this, the king invited him to his court and treated him like a

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royal guest. When the time came for him to depart, the sanyasi blessed the queen, saying, "My daughter, have faith in God. May your wish be granted!"

In a few years the queen had four beautiful children—three sons and one daughter. The daughter was named Damayanti.

The little princess grew up to be a woman of great beauty and charm. Far and wide people heard of her and many suitors of royal birth sought her hand in marriage.

One such king was Nala, who ruled the kingdom of Nishada in Central India. Nala himself was without a peer in looks and elegance. He was reputed to be a brave warrior and a just and generous ruler.

One quiet evening the King of Nishada was strolling in his palace grounds when he saw a flock of beautiful swans disporting in the placid waters of the garden pool. Nala came nearer to admire their long curving necks and their gold-touched feathers. He seized one by the neck. Suddenly the swan spoke in a human voice which startled the king.

"Great King, spare my life and I shall do you a good turn. I shall fly to the regions where Damayanti lives and praise you to her. Her heart will be so touched that she will think of no one but you."

The king gazed at the swan with astonished eyes. He held it gently and said, "I shall not harm you, my beautiful bird. Go to Damayanti's land and bring back her message to me." He released the swan and watched it rise lightly and gracefully into the skies.

The swan flew over rivers and dales and mountains, and over wide wide stretches of land. At the time it

reached the land where Damayanti lived, the beautiful princess was sitting by a flowing stream in her garden, throwing pebbles into the water.

The swan came and perched by her side. Damayanti lifted her hand to caress its neck. The bird hopped one step away and spoke, "Lovely Princess, in the distant regions of Nishada the brave King Nala thinks of you and you alone. He has sent me to you with his message of love."

The princess started from her reverie. She had heard many tales of the heroic Nala and had secretly harboured a wish to see him. Smiling into the swan's eyes, she said, "Beautiful bird, fly back to your King and tell him that he must get ready to come to my swayam-vara<sup>1</sup> which my father will soon proclaim."

Not long after King Bhima sent messengers to distant kingdoms announcing the swayamvara of his daughter.

Great lords thronged the court of King Bhima—princes and nobles, who vied with one another in colour and pageantry. The earth resounded with the jingling of their weapons, the crunching of chariot wheels and the clattering of horses' hoofs. The gods of Indra's court felt envious of all this glory and pomp. They implored their king to let them go down to the earth. Indra consented, and himself came down at their head, accompanied by Agni, the god of fire, Varuna, king of the waters, and Yama, lord of the dead.

On their way they met King Nala who, with his attendants, was as impatiently heading for the same

<sup>1</sup> On this day a princess chose her husband from the assembly of suitors that her father invited for the purpose.

destination. They stopped him and told him who they were. Nala bowed his head in reverence.

"If you promise to do our bidding, you shall get what you desire," they said to him.

Nala gave his promise.

"Hasten then to Princess Damayanti's private bower and tell her from us that we are coming to seek her hand in marriage. Praise us to her and tell her to choose one of us as her husband."

Nala was stunned. How could he do that? He loved Damayanti and wanted to marry her himself. But a promise was a promise and no worthy man ever went back upon his word.

With the celestial power the gods bestowed on him, Nala sped to Vidarbha, and entered the palace gates unseen, went past winding doors and courtyards, and soon found himself in the princess's apartments. There, with eyes cast down, he related what the gods had said to him and persuaded Damayanti to choose a husband from them.

"But I can't," cried the princess, "in my heart I have already chosen you as my husband. I cannot marry anyone else."

Say what he would, the princess would not relent. Nala went back to the gods and explained what had happened.

They were furious. "We shall see how she insults us."

In the magnificent assembly where sat the brightest jewels of the realm, Damayanti came, lovely and regal, holding a garland of flowers in her hands. This was her moment of trial. In the perfect quiet that prevailed, she advanced slowly. All at once she stopped with a gasp.

There in front of her were five Nalas, each the very image of the other.

Who was the real Nala? Damayanti's head reeled dizzily. She closed her eyes and prayed to the gods to come to her rescue. Seeing her in this helpless plight, the gods answered her prayer. They revealed to her their marks of divinity.

•The deities cast no shadow upon the earth. Their eyes looked straight and their skins were completely dry. Their feet did not touch the ground. The real Nala, on the other hand, was tense and restless. On his forehead were beads of perspiration and he beckoned to her with impatient eyes. Damayanti dropped the wreath of flowers around his neck.

Thus were Nala and Damayanti married. The gods blessed the happy couple and went back to their heavenly abode.

## *The Stolen Ploughshares*

*"A rogue out-rogued with tit for tat—  
If mice can eat a ploughshare, why,  
Ospreys away with boys can fly".*

ONCE UPON a time there was a farmer who lived with his family at the foot of the Himalayas. His hut was a modest dwelling of wood and straw. There were several others like it round about, belonging to other farmers. The river Brahmaputra, flowing down the steep inclines of the mountains, ran very near this place, providing water for their fields and cultivation.

The farmer worked hard all the year. Once when the crop was plentiful and the farmer's returns were more than what he usually had, he decided to take his family to the neighbouring town for a holiday.

Before he left, however, he went to a friend's house



and deposited five hundred ploughshares with him for safe keeping.

Now this friend was a greedy landowner who lived on the toil of others. He was never satisfied with what he had and always yearned for more and more. His friend's ploughshares tempted his cupidity. So he sold them while the farmer was away and pocketed the proceeds.

After six months the farmer returned. He went to his friend the landowner, and asked for the ploughshares. The latter looked miserable, and with tears in his eyes explained how the rats had eaten them all away.

"My friend," continued the landowner, "the rats are a great nuisance. They give me no peace at all. When I found what they had done to your ploughshares, I did not know what to do. Now how shall I face you? I feel so ashamed."

"But," asked the incredulous farmer, "the ploughshares were made of iron. How can rats eat iron?"

"Alas, in this case they did," replied the landowner. And he took the farmer inside to show him the mouse-dung where he had kept his ploughshares.

The farmer remained quiet. He knew his friend the landowner, and guessed what must have happened. "He thinks I'm a fool," the farmer said to himself, turning to go away. "I will wait and teach him a lesson some day."

He did not have long to wait. The day of Divali came, and the whole village was out to celebrate this festival of lights. The farmer, accompanied by his two sons, went to his friend the landowner.

"With your permission," the farmer said, "may I

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take your boy along with my boys for a bath in the holy waters of the Brahmaputra?" The landowner consented.

Arriving at the banks of the river, the four of them played games and laughed and romped all over the place. In a game of hide-and-seek the farmer took his friend's son up on a tree and, hiding him in the branches, told him to wait there quietly and make no noise.

Then the farmer repaired to the landowner's house and with tears streaming down his cheeks related how an osprey had suddenly swooped down upon the three boys as they were playing and taken away his friend's son.

"But, my dear farmer" cried the landowner, hardly able to restrain his anger; "how can an osprey fly away with a little boy? You must be mad."

"Alas, dear friend, in this case an osprey did," replied the farmer.

"You shall come with me to the court," shouted the landowner, and he dragged the poor farmer to the door of the village headman who settled disputes among the villagers.

To him the farmer repeated exactly what he had said to the landowner. He finished by saying that an osprey had seized the little boy and flown away with him before they knew what had happened.

"Indeed," spoke the headman quietly but very sternly; "do you think we are fools here? Whoever heard of an osprey flying away with a little boy?"

"And whoever heard of rats eating iron ploughshares?" countered the farmer.

"Explain yourself," said the headman, and the farmer related the whole story of his stolen ploughshares.

## *THE STOLEN PLOUGHSHARES*

The headman looked at the landowner, who was by this time overcome with shame. He confessed that he had sold the farmer's ploughshares to make money. The farmer also confessed that the landowner's son was safely hidden away in the branches of a tree. Both of them promised to restore to the other what was his and returned happily to their homes.

## *The Lion and the Rabbit*

ONCE UPON a time, in a certain forest, there lived a lion, great and powerful. His name was Fierce and he ruled his kingdom with an iron hand. His subjects—deer, buffaloes, jackals, rabbits—were in constant terror of him because when he was hungry, he killed them all indiscriminately and ate them.

For this reason the forest wore a deserted look, for no animal dared roam about at will. They did their work stealthily, noiselessly. The very trees seemed to echo the eerie stillness that reigned in the forest.

This life was growing intolerable. So the animals came together one day and held a conference and decided to lead a deputation to their king to implore his justice and compassion. They went before Fierce and their leader, bowing to the ground, addressed him thus, "O mighty monarch, the greatness of your

name has gone beyond this kingdom. People from other lands speak of your justice and your power. We, your subjects, have come to you with a petition, hoping you will be just to us in your greatness."

"What is the matter?" asked Fierce with a lofty air, feeling pleased with their praise of him.

"We request you not to fall on us unawares. We realise that you must have your dinner. But allow us to manage that for you. Daily at noon, one of us will come to you for dinner."

"Very well," replied the lion, "it shall be as you say. But see that you don't fail, or I shall swallow you all at the same time," he said, striking his tummy with glee.

The animals went away, happy to have matters settled amicably. They now roamed the woods and the forest resounded with their echoes. The lion kept his part of the bargain and they kept theirs. Everyday one of them—every species contributing in turn—went to the lion for his dinner.

A day came when it was the turn of the rabbits to contribute. Among them a little rabbit, named Clever, absolutely insisted that he would go.

Now Clever was an intelligent, resourceful little fellow. He was full of ideas. Ever since the animals had made this arrangement with Fierce, he had been constantly asking himself, "Is there no way of killing this lion?"

Today, as he made his way to the lion under a scorching sun, he swore that he would kill the lion.

"I may be small—but when did wit ever fail to baffle might?"

Slowly, dripping with perspiration, he arrived where

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Fierce sat waiting impatiently for his dinner. Pacing up and down, he was fuming with rage at the delay in his dinner. And then to see only a little rabbit when he could have swallowed a whole lot of them, that was too much! He broke into a tremendous roar that shook the trees and caught the rabbit in his fangs.

"You impudent little nobody, you trifle with me! Here I am, famished with hunger and you find only a little rabbit to satisfy me with? After you I will go and finish the rest of them in one big bite."

"Listen, Master, listen," panted little Clever, terrified at the unexpected turn things had taken, "listen before you eat me. It is for your own good I speak," and with words tumbling out of his mouth, he related how, as he was coming along with four other rabbits to provide Fierce his dinner, another lion leaped upon them from his lair, caught his companions in his one big paw and said that he was the master to whom even Fierce must bend and pay homage.

"What!" roared Fierce, his hunger forgotten in an instant. "A rival to challenge me in my own dominions! Show me this fellow at once. I shall feast on him today and invite all my subjects to join me in the celebration. Ha, ha, ha!"

Together Fierce and Clever proceeded to the spot where on a rising ground there was a well.

"That is his den, Master," cried Clever, pointing to the well. "He is very well placed; his position is far more secure than yours. Do you think you could risk attacking him like this?"

"Do you doubt my power?" thundered Fierce. "I intend paying him a visit in his own fortress." So saying,

he climbed up and came to the edge of the well whence he looked down and met his own reflection in the water. Thinking it was another lion, he roared aloud; the echo of his roar came back to him. Furious, he leapt down and fell with a resounding crash into the water.

Thus did little Clever get rid of the terror of their forest and free his friends from bondage. The inhabitants of the forest rejoiced when they heard the story. They carried little Clever on their shoulders, and joining hands together, they danced round and round in wild joy.

That is why people say:

“Intelligence is power—but where  
Could power and folly make a pair?  
The rabbit played upon his pride  
To fool him; and the lion died.”

## *The Crow and the Snake*

*F*AR AWAY in a jungle grew a big banyan tree in which lived a crow and his wife. They had built a cosy nest for themselves and lived in it for many years.

One day a big terrifying snake came and settled himself in the hollow trunk of the tree. During the day when the parent crows went out in search of food, the snake crawled through the hollow trunk and ate some of their chicks.

This happened every time the crows went out. The chicks died as soon as they were born. At last the mother crow could bear it no longer. She fell at her husband's feet and implored him to take her away to another place where the dreadful snake would not follow them.

"My dear," replied the father crow, "we have lived in this tree a long time. We cannot leave our home and go to a new unfamiliar place."



## THE CROW AND THE SNAKE

"My lord, what you say is true," sobbed his wife, "but how are we to go on living in this constant peril?"

The crow was terribly upset. He was attached to the place but more than that he loved his wife and children. So he went to seek advice from the wise old jackal who lived not far away.

The old jackal, sitting on a cot outside his hut, was delighted to see his friend the crow. "Come, my friend," he said, "what lucky chance brings you to me?"

The crow related his sorrowful tale to the jackal. "Please tell me what to do. The killing of our children is sheer death to my wife and me."

The old jackal knitted his brows in a frown and thought. His friend's plight worried him. "Do not think of going away," he advised, shaking his head, "some way will be found. The villainous snake is near his doom."

"How do you say that?"

"Because such cruelty cannot last. The snake will meet his end like the greedy heron who was killed by a crab."

"How was that?" asked the crow.

And the jackal told him the story of the heron and the crab.

In a certain place, said the jackal, there was a pond which abounded with fish of all kinds. One day a heron came and perched on the edge of the pond, looking hungrily at the fish which frolicked in and out of its clear rippling water.

Being old the heron wished to find an easy way of catching fish. How was he to do that?

That whole day he lingered at the pond's edge,

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

looking sadly into the water. Seeing him, the fish got scared and disappeared under the surface. But the heron took no notice; he made no attempt to catch them.

The next day he came to the pond again and stood quietly in a corner as he had done before. Numerous fish swam within his reach but the heron pretended not to see them. At last a little crab who also lived in the pond among the fish and who had been watching the heron with curiosity, came cautiously up to him and said, "Uncle, this is strange. Your kinsfolk do not spare even a bone in our body, whereas you, stand there, quiet and thoughtful, making no attempt to catch us."

"Catch you for what?" the heron replied, and sighed. "I am now an old man. The fruit from the trees is enough to keep me through the remaining days of my life."

"Then what is troubling you? Why do you brood and look so lost?"

"Alas, it is not on my account I brood. My worry is entirely for you."

"For us?" the crab asked incredulously. "Please explain, Uncle."

"Yesterday I was resting in my nest when I overheard the conversation of two fishermen. They were saying that the fish in this pond are particularly good, that they must bring their nets here next time to catch them. And I feel very unhappy because I like you. I shall miss the music of splashing water when you play. I shall be very lonely without you."

The crab dived down to tell other fish about the calamity that was to befall them. In a group they returned to the heron, entreating him to save them.

"Dear Uncle, please think of some way to rescue us. We shall always be grateful to you."

"Let me think," said the heron, and stood silent for awhile as if in thought. Then he looked up and said, "I can think of only one way and that is to transfer you from this place to another. There the ocean is vast and deep and not all the nets of fishermen will be able to catch you. I am a bird and I will carry you one by one in my bill to that ocean."

The fish were happy because they thought they were safe. The heron was happy because he had got the whole lot in his snare.

That very evening the old rascal began his task of transferring them from the pond to his insides. He lifted a fish in his bill, carried it a certain distance to a slab of stone and ate it, scattering the bones about. Day after day he made the trip with supreme delight and satisfaction, congratulating himself on his shrewdness.

One day, when he came to the pond on his usual pilgrimage, he found the crab waiting for him.

"Uncle, pray save me, too, from the jaws of death," the little creature pleaded.

The heron smacked his lips. A fish daily was becoming a monotony, he reflected. Wouldn't it be nice to vary it with a crab now and then? So the heron replied, "Come, my child, today it is going to be your turn."

Picking up the crab, the heron made for his destination. They flew over a lake, a river and green fields. Still the heron flew on. Growing impatient the crab asked, "Aren't we nearing the bottomless sea yet?"

"Here we are," the heron replied as he landed on a slab of rock under a hot blazing sun. "Look around you.

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

All your friends have found repose here. Today it is your turn to join them."

With horror the crab saw the scattered bones of the fish the heron had eaten. It was a sickening sight but he had the presence of mind not to betray himself. Before the crafty bird could drop him, the crab gripped the traitor's neck in all his nippers and squeezed it, cutting off his head.

Then the crab painfully made his way back to the pond, dragging the bird's neck. When he was among the fish, he told them about the heron's treachery. The horrified water dwellers vowed from that moment that in future they would guard against strangers who were too ready with their advice. Usually it concealed some motive of self-interest.

When the jackal had finished his story, the crow said, "My friend, tell me now how this villainous snake is to meet his doom."

"Just outside this jungle," answered the jackal, "is a kingdom ruled by a great king. His queen has a collection of lovely ornaments. Try and steal a gold chain of hers when someone is watching you and drop it in the tree's trunk where the snake lives. Then you see what happens."

Straightaway the crow flew to that kingdom. Reaching there, he saw the women of the king's court playing in a pool of glistening water while their garments, necklaces and diamond rings were lying on the bank, guarded by an attendant.

In a flash the crow came down, caw-cawing loudly and flew up again, dangling a precious gold chain in its bill.

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Instantly the king's guards and chamberlains were called to chase the bird. Clutching their weapons they spurred after him on horseback, letting fly dust in wild pursuit. Cleverly the crow led them to the tree where the snake lived. Dropping the gold chain right into the hollow of the trunk, he went and perched on another tree at a safe distance.

• The king's men saw the chain drop and headed for the spot where it had fallen. In the hollow they dug with their spears and saw inside a big black snake. Holding the chain up he was hissing with delight at the rare prize that had come his way.

Immediately the men pounced on him with their weapons and killed him. They recovered the golden chain and carried it to the king.

From his perch the crow watched everything. Then he flew over to his nest and lived in peace with his wife and children for the rest of his life.



*Pakistan*







## *The Mirror*

*M*ANY MANY years ago a Kabuli pedlar was walking through a rice field in Bengal. He stumbled over a stone and as he bent down to remove it, a mirror dropped from his bag.

The next day the farmer who owned the field came to harvest the rice and he found the mirror. To this simple villager who had never been outside his village, the object was a curiosity. He turned it over in his hands, wondering what it was and then held it before his eyes. His own image stared back at him. The farmer was extremely puzzled.

"I think that is my father's face," he said.

The farmer had lost his father in early childhood. Now as a man he bore a strong resemblance to his parent of whose face he had a faint recollection. So he held up the mirror again, saluted it respectfully and then kissed it with affection.

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"Oh, my father, you have come down from the sky," he said. "You have been hiding in my paddy field. Come, my dear father, I'll take you home."

With the mirror in his hand he walked round the field, talking and explaining what he had been doing.

"Look father, after your death I planted golden *diga* rice. I planted *lakshmi shail* rice also and it is now ready to be harvested. See how the ripe grain shines in the sun! And there beyond the fields is our house. There used to be only one room, but now I have added two more. Come and see what I have done."

He left his work and went to his house where he searched every nook and corner to find a safe place for the mirror. He had no box or chest. Finally, he saw an empty water jar in which he placed it.

Then he went back to work but all day he was abstracted and his mind dwelt on nothing but the mirror. The next day and the day after he went to work as usual but his heart was not in it. Every now and again he would return to the house, go to the water jar, take out the mirror reverently and put it back again.

"Father, I must leave you and go back to work," he would whisper. "I do not want you to be alone, but I must work so that we may eat."

Days passed and the farmer continued to behave in this curious fashion. His wife, always busy in the kitchen when he came, began to wonder what brought her husband so often to the house. She also noticed that he had grown quiet of late and talked but little to her.

"He was always so cheerful before," she thought to herself. "He used to ask me for things and he laughed

and joked so much. But now he hardly speaks to me. Why is he behaving so strangely?"

One day when she heard his footsteps, she left the kitchen and followed him. From another room she saw that he went to the water jar, picked out something and pressed it to his mouth and eyes. Then he smiled and put it back slowly in the jar.

After the farmer had gone, the wife opened the jar and took out the mirror. Like her husband she had never seen a mirror in her life. Now when her own face looked back at her, she was dumbfounded.

"So that is the matter with him!" she exclaimed in a stricken voice. "He has married another woman and keeps her in the water jar. Naturally he doesn't speak to me for he spends all his time talking to this other woman. Let him come home today, I'll teach him a lesson!"

She took a broom in her hand and waited for her husband to return. In the evening the farmer came, hot and tired after the day's hard work. He was very hungry too. But the moment he set his foot in, his wife flew at him with the broom.

"You wicked man! What have you done? Why have you deceived me? Who is this other woman you have married?" She threw the mirror at him.

"What are you doing?" asked the astonished farmer. "That is my father, my dear father." He knelt down and picked up the mirror carefully with both hands.

"Haven't I got eyes to see?" cried the angry woman and snatched the mirror from his hands. "Let me see your father. You call this woman your father?"

"You are mad."

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"Who is mad? Come and look for yourself. Does your father wear a necklace? Does he have long hair?"

Hearing raised, angry voices, a neighbour came running to see what was wrong.

"What is all this noise about?" she asked. "Why are you quarrelling with your husband? This is the first time I have heard angry words in your house."

The farmer's wife showed the mirror to her neighbour. "Look at this woman. My husband has married another woman and hidden her in the water jar. And he says that she is his father!"

The neighbour looked at the mirror over the wife's shoulder and saw two faces.

"Oh, look at these two women. This face is yours," she said, pointing to the farmer's wife. "But who is the other woman?"

Now the farmer came over. "What nonsense do you talk?" But the next instant his expression had changed. He gaped into the mirror with his mouth open. "There are three faces there!" he exclaimed.

Excitedly they looked at each other and back at the mirror. They called neighbours who gathered in eager curiosity to see the wonderful object and the mirror passed from hand to hand amid cries of wonder and delight. After much talk and explanation they began to understand what a mirror really was. News of this discovery spread quickly throughout the land and people came from far and near to see the mirror and learn of its mystery.

## *The Jackal and the Partridge*

*I*N A FOREST there once lived a jackal and a partridge who were very close friends. They spent most of their time together, going for long walks or sitting beside the river in the cool evening shadows telling each other stories.

Now the jackal was a rather self-centered, demanding creature and one day he said to the partridge, "You don't do half as much for me as I do. A good friend ought to make me laugh or cry, get me a good dinner when I am hungry, or save my life. You couldn't do all that."

"How do you know I couldn't!" replied the partridge. "Follow me and see how I make you laugh."

The partridge flew on, followed by the jackal, till they came to a long narrow road. Two weary travellers were walking along, one behind the other. The traveller in front was carrying a bundle on a stick held over his

shoulder while the other carried his shoes in his hand.

Descending, the partridge went and perched on the bundle. Because it was as light as a feather the traveller felt nothing and walked on, unconscious of the bird. But the man in the rear saw the young bird and he eyed it hungrily.

"If only I could catch it!" he said to himself. "We could have such a delicious supper." He threw his shoes at the partridge. The bird flew away and the shoes knocked off the first traveller's turban.

"How dare you throw your shoes at me?" shouted the outraged man.

"I didn't throw them at you," explained the other man. "I aimed them at the partridge perched on your stick."

"Do you think I am a fool?" cried the first man, smarting under the indignity of having his turban thrown off. "I will teach you some manners." He kept his bundle down and rushed with his stick at the other fellow.

The two men fought each other with blows and fists. Observing them, the jackal laughed so uproariously that tears ran down his face and his sides ached.

Then the partridge said to his friend, "Have you laughed enough? Are you satisfied?"

"Well, you have certainly made me laugh, but I wonder if you could make me cry. It is easy to be funny but you need to be intelligent to make people cry," said the jackal.

At that moment a hunter was coming along the road with his dogs. The partridge saw the hunter and it turned to the jackal.

## THE JACKAL AND THE PARTRIDGE

"I shall make you cry now. Hide into that hollow tree and see what happens."

The jackal did as he was told. The partridge flew towards the hunter and circled over the bushes to catch the eye of the dogs. He then flew off to the tree where his friend was hiding. The dogs smelt the jackal at once and barked so loudly that the hunter came up and dragged the jackal out by the tail. Then the dogs attacked the captive animal and tore him until the latter fell on the ground, lifeless with exhaustion.

After the hunter had gone, the jackal opened his eyes and saw the partridge sitting on the branch above him.

"Did you cry?" asked the partridge.

"Be quiet," said the bruised animal licking his wounds. "They nearly killed me."

Some time passed. Then the jackal felt hungry. "If you are a true friend, go and get me a good dinner."

"Very well," said the partridge. "Watch me and help yourself when the time comes."

It was past noon and a group of women were going towards the fields, carrying dinner for their menfolk. The partridge followed them from branch to branch, squeaking faint cries of pain.

"Look at that poor little bird," said the women. "It is wounded. Let us catch it."

They went after the partridge who swooped down just ahead of them, hopped forward, flew up over their heads, came down within their grasp and then flew off to a tree. The women kept down their baskets to catch the elusive bird. While they were chasing the partridge, the jackal got his chance and helped himself to a sumptuous variety of dinner.

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

"Now are you happy?" asked the partridge.

"I admit that you have made me laugh and cry. You have also given me a good dinner. But the true test of friendship is whether you could save my life," said the jackal.

The partridge nodded sadly. "Perhaps you are right. I am so small and weak. Now let's get back to the forest. It is a long way to the bridge by which we came. Let us cross the river here. My friend, the crocodile, will carry us across."

They went down to the river bank where they met the crocodile who agreed to ferry them. They sat astride his broad back and off went the trio.

In the middle of the river the partridge whispered to the jackal, "The crocodile seems to be up to some tricks. He is probably thinking of eating us. What if he drops us midstream?"

The jackal grew pale with fright. "Yes, what will we do?" he asked in consternation.

"Oh, I have nothing to be afraid of," replied the partridge. "I can fly. What will you do?"

The jackal went cold with apprehension. He held tightly on to the crocodile. Midway the crocodile said, "I feel hungry. I would like something to eat."

"Now don't play tricks on us," the partridge said to the crocodile. "I can fly away. If you are thinking of eating our friend the jackal, you are going to be disappointed because he is always careful to leave his life behind at home, locked up safely, when he goes on dangerous journeys."

"Really?" the crocodile asked in disbelief. "I never heard of that."



## *THE JACKAL AND THE PARTRIDGE*

“Yes, that is really so,” the partridge replied. “You can try eating him if you like but you will get nothing. It will be like eating a stone.”

The crocodile swam on in silence while the jackal sat tense with fear. They reached the riverbank without a mishap.

“Now are you satisfied?” asked the triumphant partridge.

“Yes, dear bird, you have indeed done everything for me. You have even saved my life. But you are too cunning to have for a friend.” So saying, the jackal walked away and never went near the partridge again.

## *The Devil on Horseback*

ONE FINE MORNING a farmer went with his oxen to plough his field. He had just finished his first furrow across the field and had stopped awhile to cool his brow when a tiger walked up to him and said, "Peace be with you, my friend! It is a lovely morning today."

The farmer trembled with fear but he tried not to show his nervousness.

"I am very well, my lord," he replied in a steady voice.

"I have come to eat your oxen," said the tiger cheerfully. "Hurry up and loosen them from the plough."

The farmer felt better when he heard that it was only the oxen the tiger wanted to eat. His courage returned.

"How can I plough the field if you eat my oxen?"

"That is your problem," said the tiger. "Let me have

the oxen quickly, I am hungry. In the meantime I'll sharpen my teeth and claws."

"My lord, would it not be better for you to eat the fat milking cow my wife has at home?" the farmer begged. "Please spare my oxen. I will bring the cow which is tied up in the yard."

The tiger agreed and the farmer left his field and went home, sad and afraid to face his wife. He knew how much his children relished the creamy milk that the cow gave. His wife saw him and was surprised that he should return so early.

"What brings you home at this early hour?" she asked. "I have not yet cooked the midday meal."

The farmer told her about the tiger. The wife became red with anger.

"What, you have come to take away my beautiful cow? Where will I get milk for the children and butter for cooking? You can go and give away your silly oxen. I shall not part with the cow."

"My dear, if the oxen are gone, how shall I plough my corn field? Without corn how can we get bread?" argued the farmer.

"Yes, we must have both bread and milk," the wife replied. "If you were not so stupid, you would think of a way to trick the tiger."

"Think of a way yourself if you are so clever," retorted the angry husband.

"All right," said the wife. "Go and tell his lordship the tiger that the cow would not come with you, so I am bringing her along."

Returning to the field the farmer found the tiger still sharpening his claws and teeth. "Grr! Grr!" the tiger

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

was stamping his feet, lashing his tail and gnashing his teeth.

"My lord, just wait a little more. My wife is coming with the cow." The farmer was barely able to bring out the words.

Now, after the farmer had gone, the wife dressed herself up in her husband's best garments and wore a high turban. She then went to the stable, put a saddle on the horse, and jumping astride it, rode off to the fields.

At the path leading to the field, she sang and shouted and spurred the horse to a trot. Then she called loudly, "I hope I shall find a tiger here. I haven't tasted tiger meat since the day we had three tigers for breakfast."

When the tiger heard these words and saw the defiant rider galloping towards him, he turned tail and ran as fast as he could in the direction of the forest. He ran at such speed that he knocked over his own jackal.<sup>1</sup>

"My lord! Where are you going in this hurry?" asked the jackal.

The tiger continued to run in blind fear. "Run! Run! There is a devil on horseback in that field."

The jackal went after the tiger. "My lord, I have been standing here since early morning. What you saw in the field was not a devil but the farmer's wife dressed in her husband's clothes."

The tiger stopped running.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. If the sun had not blinded your eyes, you would have recognised her."

"Well, it looked like a devil to me."

<sup>1</sup> Tigers always have a jackal with them to eat the bones after a meal.

"My lord, don't be afraid of a woman. Let's go back together for our dinner."

The tiger was suspicious of the jackal. Perhaps the fellow was trying to trick him, he thought!

"No. You will go with me to the field and then run away," said the tiger.

To establish his good faith the jackal made a suggestion. "Then let us tie our tails together so that I can't run away."

So the tiger and the jackal tied their tails together and went to find the farmer and his wife.

Out in the field the farmer and his wife were laughing over the success of her trick. The wife was still sitting astride the horse and they were glancing down the path that the tiger had taken to flee. Of a sudden they saw the tiger and the jackal approaching.

"Run quickly," said the farmer, "they are coming to eat us."

The wife held him back. "Stop being such a coward and be quiet. I can't hear myself speak."

She waited until the two animals came within earshot. Then, with a flourish of her hand, she hailed the jackal. "Well done, Mr. Jackal! You are indeed a fine friend. How kind of you to bring me such a nice tiger."

Hearing this the tiger stopped in his tracks. Terror seized him. "You liar!" he muttered under his breath and ran for his life. The jackal, tied to his tail, went dragging after him.

The tiger ran on through thorns and bushes, over stones and rocks. In pain the jackal cried to him to stop. But the terror-stricken animal was beyond hearing. Like

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one possessed the tiger ran over hills and fields until he reached his corner of safety in the dense forest. By that time the jackal had died of severe wounds and bruises he received on the way.

## *The Jack Fruit*

WALKING LEISURELY through a market in Bengal, a Kabuli trader was looking at this shop and that when his eye fell on a strange big fruit he had never seen before. He went over to the shop and stared at the fruit, stroking his long white beard.

"What is that?" he asked the fruit seller, pointing to the large fruit with the prickly skin. "I have seen many fruits—apples, pears, grapes, dates—but never in my life have I seen such a big fruit."

"That is the jack fruit," answered the fruit seller. "It is very sweet and juicy. Many people grow them in Bengal."

"What is its price?"

"Eight annas."

The Kabuli trader counted out the money, handed it to the fruit seller and gathered the fruit in his hands. It smelt so good! He lifted it on to his turbaned head

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

and went home, wondering what it would taste like.

As soon as he reached home, he spread out a cloth on the floor and sat down to eat the fruit. He held it between his hands and took a big bite.

"Oh, it's wonderful," he said, relishing the juicy taste. He went on eating it until he had finished all of it.

Now the juice of the jack fruit is very sticky and it doesn't come off easily, not even if the person who has eaten it washes himself with soap. When people have to eat a jack fruit, they first rub oil on their hands and face to prevent the juice from sticking to the skin.

The man from Kabul did not know this. So when he finished, he went to wash his mouth and hands which were covered with the thick, sticky juice. He took the water in his hand and applied it to his mouth. The hand stuck to his beard. He tried to pull it away and in doing so a few grey hairs of his beard came out from the roots. "Oh! Oh!" he cried with pain. He put his left hand to his moustache. Again it stuck there and he had to pull hard to free his hand, tearing out more hairs from the moustache.

"This is terrible," he thought, "I must get this sticky stuff off with soap and water." So he rubbed his face and hands in a rich lather of soap but it was no use. Then he tried soda in the water; the sticky stuff became still stickier.

He spent the whole day trying all sorts of devices to clean his beard and moustache. Nothing worked. He went to bed with his face sticky, and his beard and moustache stiff with the juicy stuff.

Even at night he couldn't sleep. His beard stuck to



the pillow and the bed sheet. He got up the next morning with a weary feeling, his bed covered with streaks of white hair and his face red with pain.

He went to the market to see if someone would help him. In the crowd his flowing beard stuck to people's clothes. One man pulled his jacket free, the other had to disengage the loose end of his turban, and the third his shirt, and they glared angrily at the old man who was getting in everybody's way. He stopped at the fish seller's to buy fish. Bending down he picked up three large fish from which he selected one. Two fish clung to his beard.

"What are you doing? Go away!" The fish seller shouted at him and pulled away the fish and with it some more hairs of the Kabuli trader's beard.

The poor old man was miserable and in great pain.

"Surely there must be some way of getting off this stuff," he thought. "I must consult a Bengali. This fruit grows in Bengal."

On the way he met a Bengali boy whom he stopped. "My son, I have eaten a jack fruit and the juice has stuck to my beard and moustache. I have tried to get it off with soap and water, and I have also tried soda but it does not come off. Can you tell me what I should do?"

The boy was naughty and he thought the Kabuli trader a funny man.

"You put some ash on your beard," said the little boy, "it will come off."

The Kabuli trader went home and sprinkled ash on his beard. The result was worse—the beard and moustache were now covered with a dirty, sticky paste.

"Oh, that bad boy," he murmured sadly and wished that he had consulted an older person.

He went to a Bengali farmer and told him of his problem.

"You were foolish to have put ash on your beard. The only thing you can do now," the farmer advised, "is to go to a barber and get yourself shaved. There is no other way of getting your beard and moustache clean."

The Kabuli man was extremely dispirited. He was proud of his luxuriant beard and the air of dignity it gave him. He could not sleep that night.

"People in my village respect me because of my beard," he kept thinking. "At meetings I am asked to speak first. In the market people step aside to let me pass, and shopkeepers give me immediate attention. At the wedding feasts I am served twice as much as the other guests. If others are given five *kababs* on a plate, I am given ten. Now what shall I do? Without my beard, who will respect me?"

But he also realised that with the dirty looking beard he now had, people would not respect him either! So early next morning he visited a barber and asked him to shave off his beard and moustache.

After that, whenever he met a man without a beard, he put his hand on his shoulder and said sympathetically, "So my friend, you have eaten a jack fruit!"

## *Fair Shares*

ONCE UPON a time there were two brothers named Ibrahim and Ali. The boys had lost their mother when they were very young. Some years later, their father also died.

Their father was not a rich man. All that he left to his sons was a cow, a date-palm tree and a quilt. Now Ibrahim, the elder brother, was greedy and clever and he suggested to his younger brother that it would be better for them to divide the property so that each could look after his share with proper care. Ali who was innocent and trusting, readily agreed.

"Of the cow," said Ibrahim, "you take the front part and I will take the back. I am being very fair."

"Yes, my brother," replied the guileless Ali. It would not have crossed his mind to doubt his brother.

"Now you look after your share well and I will look after mine," Ibrahim added.

"Yes," replied Ali.

Conscientiously Ali looked after the cow, giving it plenty of fresh green grass to eat and keeping it clean. As a result the cow gave plenty of rich milk which Ibrahim collected and kept entirely for himself because, said he, according to the division the hind part of the cow belonged to him. Poor Ali did not complain.

One day a wise old man of the village who had long noticed the deception of the older brother called Ali aside and spoke to him.

"Ali, why do you feed the cow everyday?"

"Because its front part belongs to me."

"And how do you like the milk?" asked the wise man.

"Oh, my brother takes the milk because he owns the hind part of the cow," replied Ali simply. "I do not know what the milk tastes like."

"You are indeed a very foolish boy," the wise man said. "You do all the work and your brother reaps the whole benefit."

Ali nodded. He looked dejected. "What can I do now? I agreed to take the front part of the cow and must continue to look after it."

Then the wise man whispered something in Ali's ear.

At daybreak the following day, Ibrahim came to milk the cow. As he did so, Ali who was there as usual, hit the cow's head with a stick. The cow started kicking and refused to stand still.

"What are you doing?" cried Ibrahim. "Stop hitting the cow."

"I shall do what I like with my part of the cow," answered Ali. "After all, you do what you like with your part of it and I don't interfere."

Ibrahim was quiet. He could guess that someone had advised Ali; so he said, "I shall give you half the milk if you stop beating the cow."

"And you must also provide half the fodder for the cow," said Ali.

Ibrahim had no alternative but to agree.

The other gift of inheritance to be shared by the brothers was the date-palm tree. A date-palm tree is a useful thing. The way farmers use a date-palm tree is to make holes in the bark and collect the sweet juice which flows out. From the juice they make brown sugar; they also use the juice in many food preparations.

In dividing the date-palm tree, Ibrahim tried to be clever again. "If we cut the tree, it will be of no use to you or me. So let's keep it as it is. You take one part of it and I will take the other. This time you decide which part you would like to have."

Ali said, "I will take the lower part."

"Then look after it well," said Ibrahim.

Ali took great care of the tree. Morning and evening he fetched water in huge buckets and watered the roots of the tree so that it grew big and strong. He was always busy. Ibrahim, on his part, only fixed a pot on the upper part of the tree and came every evening to collect the sweet juice which he used for making sugar and a variety of tasty food. He gave no share of the juice to Ali.

One warm day the wise man of the village came along when Ali was watering the tree. Seeing the boy stoop under the weight of heavy buckets, he stopped and said, "My boy, you have been tricked again. You do all the work but your brother takes all the juice."

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

"Yes, I have been foolish," said Ali sadly. "I myself chose the lower part."

"But you can do something," and the wise man drew near and whispered some words in his ear.

That evening just as the sun was setting in the western horizon, Ibrahim came bouncing to collect his juice. He was surprised to find Ali standing there with an axe. As he climbed up the tree for the pot, he saw to his horror that Ali was cutting the roots of the tree.

"You stupid fellow," shouted Ibrahim, "what are you doing?"

"I can do what I like with my part of the tree," replied Ali. "I don't tell you what you should do with the upper part."

The older brother came down. "All right, I shall give you half the juice every day. Put away that axe."

There now remained the quilt that the brothers had inherited. It was a beautiful quilt of many colours but not large enough to be cut in two parts. So the brothers decided to use it by turns. According to the agreement, Ali was to use it in the daytime and Ibrahim at night. Ali accepted the agreement without a protest.

He was soon to find that in the daytime it was too hot to use the quilt. All he could do was to admire it and then fold it and put it aside. At night Ibrahim covered himself with the quilt and slept soundly. Little Ali lay awake, feeling cold under a thin bed covering.

When the wise man came that way again, Ali told him of his problem. As on previous occasions the former whispered a few words of advice in Ali's ear and went on.

That night Ibrahim had a shock. When he touched

the quilt, he found it soaking wet. He called his brother.

“What have you done to the quilt?”

“My brother, it was so hot today that I put the quilt in water to cool and then used it,” Ali answered.

Ibrahim was very angry.

“You silly boy, don’t you know that a quilt is not to be put in water?”

•“I can do what I like with it in the daytime. I don’t tell you how you are to use it at night.”

Ibrahim felt ashamed and he placed a hand on his brother’s shoulder. “My little brother, I have been selfish with you. From now on I shall be different and never try to trick you again.”

## *The Jackal and the Iguana*

A HUNGRY JACKAL was wandering through a village one dark night in search of something to eat. As he crept along silently, he found a pair of worn-out shoes in the mud. He could not eat the shoes but he thought they looked too dainty to throw away. So he tied them to his ears, letting them hang like ear-rings.

He went further and came to the edge of the pond situated in a lonely region near the forest where all the animals came daily for drinking water. Here he gathered many old bones which he placed in a heap and plastered them over with mud. Climbing on this elevation, he sat down and assumed a pose of lofty grandeur.

In the morning animals began to come to the pond for a drink. To each of them the jackal called in a loud voice and said, "Hi! Stop! Look at me, I'm the monarch of all I survey. Bow to me before you drink a drop of



## THE JACKAL AND THE IGUANA

water. Repeat this verse which I have made in honour of the occasion :

“His castle is silver, all covered with gold.  
In his ears are jewels. A prince I behold!”

The animals were vastly amused to see the jackal make such a fool of himself. He looked so ridiculous, sitting on a mud heap with shabby shoes dangling from his ears. To humour him the animals repeated the lines, had a drink and went away, laughing at the jackal all the while.

Even the mighty tiger treated the jackal's request as a joke and repeated the verse with all due deference. When the jackal saw the tiger bowing to him, he felt mighty big and important. His chest puffed out with pride and he could hardly contain himself. “Why,” he said to himself, “I must be great! I must be really wonderful!”

Later an iguana<sup>1</sup> came crawling down to the water.

“Hi! You there!” called the jackal. “Don't drink water till you have recited this verse:

“His castle is silver, all covered with gold.  
In his ears are jewels. A prince I behold!”

“Oh, Mr. Jackal,” said the iguana, “my mouth is very dry. Let me drink a drop of water before I say your beautiful lines. Have you composed them yourself?”

“Yes,” the jackal replied, feeling very flattered.

“You are a poet,” said the iguana. “I must have a

<sup>1</sup> A big lizard.

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

drink of water before I am able to say these lines properly."

"Certainly," said the jackal.

The iguana put its nose into the water and drank and drank until the jackal thought it would never stop. He was still watching and wondering where all the water was going when the iguana lifted its nose and began to move away.

"Hi! Where are you going?" cried the jackal. "You must say the verse before you go."

"Yes, yes," said the iguana; "I almost forgot. Let me try my voice. Doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, te, doh. Now! What did you say? I must memorize the words."

The jackal repeated his lines over and over again and so lost was he in the rhythm of his words that he had not noticed the iguana crawling away. When he stopped, a sound floated toward him; it was the iguana's clear voice singing from a distance:

"Bones make up his castle, with mud it's plastered  
o'er.

Old shoes are his ear-rings. A jackal, nothing  
more!"

The jackal could hardly believe what he heard. It took him a few moments to recover his balance. Then he jumped down from his height and went after the iguana.

Moving at a great speed, the iguana had reached its hole and was all but in, when the jackal caught it by the tail and held it.

The iguana pulled in while the jackal gripped the tail

## *THE JACKAL AND THE IGUANA*

tightly with his teeth. They pulled till the iguana thought that its tail would come off and the jackal thought his teeth would come out. When neither seemed to succeed, the iguana said in its sweetest voice, "My friend, I was only teasing you. If you let go off my tail, I can turn round and come out."

The jackal let go, and in a flash the iguana had disappeared in its hole. The jackal dug away until his claws were sore and all the time he heard the iguana singing softly:

"Bones make up his castle, with mud it's plastered  
o'er.

Old shoes are his ear-rings. A jackal, nothing  
more!"

## *The Boatman and the Scholar*

A LEARNED MAN was one day going across the river Ganges in a sailboat. The sky was overcast with deep dark clouds and in the grey, wide expanse of water the boat looked small and frail, occupied only by the boatman who rowed and the scholar who was absorbed in reading.

Slowly and silently the boat moved up and down with the current. The boatman was concentrating on his rowing and the scholar on his book. Suddenly the latter looked up.

"Have you read any history?" he asked the boatman.

"No, master," replied the boatman quietly.

"That is a great pity," said the scholar. "History books are full of interesting stories of the ancient kings and queens and battles fought valiantly by great warriors. History tells us about the people through the ages—how they lived and ate and dressed when the world

began and how the various changes have taken place gradually in our mode of living. It tells us about the different civilizations. Why haven't you read any history?"

"I have never learnt to read, master," said the boatman simply.

There was silence between them again. The boatman rowed and the scholar read. Only a splash, splash, splash of water could be heard as the boatman plied his oars.

After a brief while the scholar raised his head.

"Have you studied geography?"

"No, master."

"Geography teaches us about the world and the countries in which it is divided," said the scholar. "It tells us that the earth is round and where the continents, mountains and rivers are. From geography we learn about the winds, rain, and the various phenomena of nature; we learn of people living in distant lands and where metals, spices and precious stones are found. It is a fascinating study. You know nothing about these things?"

"I do not know about these things," the boatman said.

The scholar sighed. "Without this knowledge your life is not worth living."

The boatman made no reply. He continued to row.

After a few moments the scholar spoke again.

"Have you read science?"

"No, master."

"Do you really mean it?" asked the scholar. "Science explains to us such things as the sun, the moon and the

lightning. Man's progress is entirely due to science. Scientists are very important people in the world today. But you know nothing. Your life has been useless; in fact you might as well be dead."

The scholar closed his book and relapsed into silence. Black clouds had gathered in the sky, a north wind had started and there were occasional flashes of lightning. A storm was coming and the boat was only halfway across the river. It had still a considerable distance to go.

The boatman pointed to the sky. "Look at the black clouds. A storm is coming. Can you swim?"

The scholar was visibly agitated. "Oh dear! I cannot swim." He shivered in the cold wind.

It was now the boatman's turn to raise a quizzical eyebrow.

"What! You can't swim!" he said to the scholar. "You know so much of history, geography and science but you haven't learnt swimming. You will soon see that your life has been useless."

The storm started. The boat capsized. With bold strokes the boatman swam and reached the bank safely but the poor scholar was drowned in the great river Ganges.

*Tibet*



### *The Witty Hare*

Like the Wise Rabbit of Burmese tales, the Hare is the hero of many a tale from Tíbet. He enjoys pride of place among the animals. Gifted with a sense of adventure and a quick wit he resolves difficult situations with ease and rescues the weak from the tyranny of the strong.



## *The Kyang, the Fox, the Wolf and the Hare*

ONE FINE SPRING day in the upper part of a Tibetan valley overlooking vast cultivated lands, a hungry wolf was roaming about in search of food. It was a day when birds fluttered joyously, darting in and out of trees and animals came out of their long wintry confinement to breathe the soft cool air. As he wandered, he came upon a young kyang<sup>1</sup>, about a year old, grazing on the thin grass that had just sprouted.

"Ah, that will make a fine meal," thought the wolf and was about to pounce on his prey when the kyang noticed him.

"Please, Uncle Wolf, do not eat me," entreated the poor animal. "After the hard winter I am very thin. By

<sup>1</sup> The kyang is a wild ass of Tibet.

## TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS

autumn I shall be big and twice my size and will make a better feast for you."

"In that case come and meet me at this very spot exactly six months later," said the wolf and galloped off.

When autumn came the wolf set out for the place where he was to meet the kyang. Going across the hills he encountered a fox.

"You seem in a great hurry," said the fox. "Where are you going?"

"I have an appointment today with a fat kyang," replied the wolf and told him how they had arranged to meet six months ago.

The fox did not want to be left behind.

"The kyang is too big a feed for one. Could I come too and share in the feast?"

"Come along," said the wolf and the two of them went on together.

On the way they met a hare.

"Hullo! Where are you two going?"

The wolf explained where they were going.

The Hare felt unhappy about the kyang. It was so wonderful to live and roam among the hills and green pastures. Why should the poor little thing die for the sake of these selfish creatures? In his mind he decided that he must think of a way of rescuing the kyang. But he had to be careful not to arouse their suspicions.

"The kyang is a very large animal," the Hare said. "You will get sick if you eat all of it. May I also join you?"

"You may. The more we have for company, the better," replied the wolf. So the three of them proceeded together.

## *THE KYANG, THE FOX, THE WOLF & THE HARE*

When they approached the meeting place, they saw the young kyang waiting for them forlornly under a tree. His eyes had a sad, hunted look; otherwise he was big and fat and seemed to have fed generously during the summer. Seeing him the wolf licked his chops and his eyes gleamed.

"Well, here we are according to our agreement," he said to his companions and glanced greedily at the kyang. "Look at him. Doesn't he look well and plump, and fit for a feast?"

The wolf seized the kyang by the neck. The Hare interrupted him.

"My friends, this is a wasteful way of killing a fine young kyang. I have a better way to suggest. Don't you think it'd be better to strangle him? That will leave his body intact for us."

The other two agreed.

"Then leave everything to me. Over the hill on yonder side is a shepherd's encampment. I will go and borrow a rope from them for making slip-knots."

The Hare went and presently returned with a big rope. He made a big slip-knot at one end and two small slip-knots at the other end.

"Now listen carefully to my instructions," he said. "The kyang is a large powerful animal and it will need the strength of all three of us to strangle him. We will place him here with the big slip-knot around his neck. At the farther end you will stand, holding the small slip-knots. I shall stand in the middle with the loose end held tightly in my teeth. As soon as I give the signal, you pull hard."

So saying, he assigned each animal his position,

slipped the big loop over the kyang's neck and the small loops over the necks of the wolf and the fox. He grabbed the loose end between his teeth. "Pull," shouted the Hare.

The animals pulled. The kyang came forward a few paces while the wolf and the fox felt themselves being dragged along the ground and the loops choking them.

"Pull harder," cried the Hare and let go the loose end. The wolf and the fox fell face downwards and were strangled to death. The Hare removed the loop from the kyang's neck and scampered off home, feeling he had done a good day's work.

## *The Hare and the Lions*

ONCE UPON a time a lion and a lioness lived in a den situated among rocks on the slopes of a mountain. They were both big, fierce animals, preying indiscriminately upon all the smaller beasts in that part of the country. In course of time they had spread such terror around that the animals of that neighbourhood lived in constant fear of their lives and dared not move about freely.

It chanced one day that while the lion was hunting for food, sniffing around bends and corners for unwary animals, he came upon the Hare sleeping behind a boulder. Immediately he seized the animal in his great paws and was about to devour him when the Hare spoke.

“O great Lion, there lives in a pond in the valley below a big ferocious animal, more fitting for your appetite than poor little me. But I doubt if you will be able to catch him. He is very strong and his roar is louder than yours.”

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

"I am the lord of this territory and there is no one stronger or more powerful than me," thundered the lion. "Show me where this animal is."

The Hare shook his head.

"No, no, Your Honour. You must not try to meet this animal. You will be no match for him. I pray you content yourself with small animals like me."

This so infuriated the lion that he kicked the Hare and ordered him to lead the way without another word.

Down the hill they came, the wiry Hare followed by the great big lion, until they reached the edge of a huge square tank full of water. Under a calm cloudless sky the water of the tank was smooth and clear. The Hare walked over to the other side.

"Please approach carefully, Your Majesty. I can see your rival standing inside. I beg you not to provoke him to a fight."

The lion moved closer and glared into the water. Sure enough, his reflection stared back at him, which the lion thought was another animal, fixing him with a glare equally fierce. The lion opened his mouth and growled. The other animal also opened his mouth and growled. The lion made as if to attack. His enemy threatened in the same manner. Now the lion could hold himself no longer. He sprang into the water and fell with a heavy thud.

The Hare came forward triumphantly. He began to throw stones at the lion who was struggling desperately to climb up. At last he grew too weary to struggle; he lost consciousness and was drowned.

Having accomplished the destruction of the lion, the Hare turned his attention to the lioness. Near the lion's

den there was an old ruined castle. The Hare knew that one of the walls of the castle had a deep crevice with a wide opening at one end which tapered down to a narrow opening at the other. The Hare now set out in search of the lioness and found her pacing up and down in front of their den, greatly perturbed over her husband's long absence.

"My respects to you, Madam," said the Hare in a sorrowful voice. "I have brought you sad tidings. Your lord the Lion got into a fight with a big powerful animal this morning and he has been vanquished. He is lying below in a dying state."

"Go away," roared the lioness. "How dare you come and tell me lies? There is no animal more powerful than the lion."

"There is," replied the Hare. "Why don't you come and see for yourself? But I'd advise you not to take any risks. He will finish you in no time."

Enraged, the lioness tried to grab him but the Hare eluded her. He ran down the hill, chased by the lioness at close heels. He made straight for the castle and disappeared into the wall through the large opening. The lioness followed suit. The Hare emerged from the other end but the lioness was wedged tightly in the small aperture, unable to retreat or go through.

The Hare stood outside, observing her violent struggle to free herself. He laughed and pelted her with stones. When he had tired of this, he went away to tell the good news to his friends. The lioness remained in the trap for a few days and died eventually of exhaustion and starvation.

## *The Hare Rescues the Sheep*

**T**HERE LIVED an old sheep and her lamb in a low-lying valley of Tibet. Every year at the beginning of summer it was their practice to leave the valley and travel up to the great northern plateau where grass grew luxuriantly and herds of sheep and goats grazed contentedly on the rich extensive pastures.

One spring, soon after the cold winds, the sheep and her lamb set out for the north. They had started a little early in the year to avoid the season's rush of mass migration. As they strolled along, the little lamb skipping about beside his mother, they suddenly came upon a large, fierce-looking wolf approaching from the opposite direction. As soon as the wolf saw the sheep, he came bounding up and smacked his lips.

"Isn't this a lucky chance, Aunty Sheep?" he exclaimed with delight. "I am so hungry. You and your lamb are just what I was looking for."



The poor sheep was pale with fright.

"Please, Uncle Wolf, do not eat us now," she pleaded. "We are on our way to the northern pastures. After we have fed during the summer months, we shall both be very much fatter than we are now. It will be better for you to eat us on our return journey."

"Very well," said the wolf, "this is a bargain. I shall be waiting for you at this spot in the autumn."

He galloped off and the sheep and her lamb continued their journey to the north.

All summer they grazed on the succulent grass of the great plateau, basking in the warm sunshine during day and returning to their sheds after sunset. Days passed rapidly. Amid such bountiful surroundings, the sheep forgot their encounter with the wolf. By autumn they were both fat and the lamb had grown into a fine young sheep.

When the time came for returning to the south, the mother sheep remembered her bargain with the wolf. The memory made her heart ache and depressed her immensely. As they started on their homeward journey and moved farther and farther south, she grew more and more dejected.

One day when they were very near the place where they had met the wolf, it happened that the Hare was passing by. He was gay and cheerful and came hopping along the road to greet them. But on seeing the sheep he stopped short; she looked so downcast and sad.

"Why, Sister Sheep, what is the matter?" the Hare asked with concern. "On a bright day like this, why do you look so sad?"

"How can I help it, my friend?" replied the sheep in a

voice hoarse with grief and related her meeting with the wolf on their upward journey. "We are both going to die soon." She broke down and burst into tears.

"Dear me! Dear me!" said the Hare, much distressed. "Don't feel so bad. You leave this matter to me. I will manage the wolf."

He then retired to a corner to consider what he should do. The only way to deal with the wolf was to frighten him. The latter would understand no appeals to reason or sympathy. "What should I do?" thought the Hare over and over again.

Suddenly an idea struck him. "Ah yes, that will scare him all right."

He dressed himself up in a new robe of woollen cloth, wore a long ear-ring in his left ear and a fashionable hat on his head. Next he strapped a small saddle on to the back of the sheep and tied two small bundles with a rope across the lamb's back. These preparations over, he took a large sheet of paper in his hand, thrust a pen behind his ear, and mounting upon the back of the sheep, he led the procession down the path.

Lomden the Hare now looked every inch an official, proud and arrogant in his high authority, apparently on his way to a great unknown destination. The Hare knew how the sight of an official struck terror into the heart of the boldest of peasants. It would indeed be a surprise if this grand turnout failed to impress the wolf!

The procession soon arrived at the place of appointment. To be sure the wolf was waiting for them.

"Eh there! Get out of my way. Why are you blocking the road?" cried the Hare.

## *THE HARE RESCUES THE SHEEP*

The wolf was dismayed and visibly puzzled to see the amazing spectacle before him.

"I have an appointment here with the sheep and the lamb," he replied. "Pray, who are you?"

"I am Lomden the Hare and I have been deputed to India on a special mission by the Emperor. I have a commission to take ten wolf skins as a present to the King of India. How fortunate that I should have met you here! Your skin will do for one."

So saying, the Hare took the pen in his hand, and wrote down 'one' on his sheet of paper.

The wolf was terrified. Before the Hare could look up, he had turned tail and fled. Faster and faster he ran, not even daring to look back.

The sheep and the lamb thanked the Hare for saving their lives and pursued their journey safely to their home.

## *How the Hare Got His Split Lip*

ONE DAY the Hare was going along a road winding up and down through the rocky hills when he came across the most amazing sight he had ever seen. He saw that halfway down in a deep, deep gulf a tiger was hanging precariously with his teeth to a bough growing from a cleft in the precipice.

Cautiously he peered down. The tiger, he noticed, was the same creature who had caught him once and nearly killed him. Well, thought the Hare, the fellow had got his deserts! Down in that ravine he was secure; at least he could not terrorise the smaller animals. He called out to the tiger.

"Oh, Uncle Tiger, are you safe?"

"M-m-m" growled the tiger, too afraid to open his mouth in reply.

"Please say something. Do you want me to help you?"

"Ah," said the tiger, opening his mouth to say yes. But as he did so, he lost the grip on the tree and fell crashing down to the bottom of the gulf and was killed.

Pleased with himself, the Hare now hopped gaily down the road, humming to himself. Presently he came across a man driving along some horses.

"Would you like to have a tiger's skin, my friend?" asked the Hare.

"Oh yes," replied the man eagerly, thinking that he would sell the skin and make a lot of money.

"Go along to that ravine and you will find a dead tiger," the Hare pointed to the gulf and the man hastened off to search for the animal, leaving the horses to the Hare's care while he was gone.

Along came two ravens who flew into a nest in a tree nearby. The Hare heard their twitter and called out to them. "Look Ravens. Here are so many horses with no one in charge. Why don't you come down and feed on the sores on their backs?"

The ravens flew down and dug their beaks into the horses' backs. The poor horses, sore with pain, stampeded and galloped away in fright in all directions.

The Hare went along. Farther on he met a boy tending sheep.

"Would you like to find a ravens' nest full of eggs?"

"Yes, please," replied the boy and following the Hare's instructions, rushed off to climb the tree where the ravens' nest was.

The Hare now caught sight of a wolf who seemed to be hunting for food. The Hare walked towards him.

"Do you know that there is a whole flock of sheep

quite unguarded down there? You can have as many of them as you want."

Without even thanking the Hare, the hungry wolf rushed headlong for the sheep, scattering them in confusion and killing as many as he could.

Meanwhile the Hare proceeded to the top of a high hill from where he could survey the whole country. Standing atop a peak, he could see the man stripping off the tiger's skin, the horses careering all over the country with the ravens pecking at their backs, the boy perched up in the tree collecting the ravens' eggs and the sheep running helter skelter, pursued by the wolf.

The view so amused the Hare that he threw back his head and laughed. He laughed till his sides ached. He laughed so uproariously that he actually split his upper lip. That is why to this day the Hare has a split lip.

## *Two Brothers and the Stone Lion*

*I*N A VALLEY of green cultivated fields there was a big house in which lived two brothers with their mother. The older of these brothers, Chamba-re, was a smart, clever man who conducted the family's business after the death of their father but he was of a cold, selfish disposition. The younger brother on the other hand was simple and kind, but rather dull. His name was Tse-ring. Although keen to do his best, he was not bright enough to be of much assistance in running the household.

After a time the elder brother began to resent this state of affairs. So he called his younger brother one day and told him plainly that it would be better for him to go out into the world and seek his fortune on his own. The poor boy was deeply hurt to hear these words.

from his brother, but he said nothing. Quietly he packed up his few belongings and went to say goodbye to his mother.

"Mother, I am going away to find work and stand on my legs," he said. "My brother is tired of supporting me and I don't blame him. I seek your blessings."

The old woman shed tears as she listened to her son's story.

"Very well, if your brother must insist on turning you out, I will come with you. I cannot live in this house with such a hard-hearted son."

Both mother and son left next morning. Having travelled a long way, by midday they reached an empty hut situated at the foot of a large hill, not far from a town. Here they sat down to rest and soon fell asleep. When they awoke, dusk had descended on the hills and it was beginning to get cold. Finding that none had yet returned to the hut, they went inside and slept there during the night.

Early next day, even before the birds were up, Tse-ring took an axe and went to the hillside to chop wood. By evening he had collected a fine bundle of wood which he carried into the town and sold for a good price. Happy with the success of his day's work, he returned to his mother and gave her his earnings.

For many days he followed this routine. Then, one morning as he was walking further up the hill looking for better timber, he turned into a sheltered corner of the hillside, obscured from view by big rocky boulders. Here he suddenly came face to face with a large life-sized lion carved out of stone.

"Oh," he cried, terribly frightened and stumbled



over a stone. He got up, shook his clothes and gazed thoughtfully at the stone image. "Perhaps," he said to himself, "it is the guardian deity of this mountain. I will come here tomorrow and make him an offering."

True to his word, he came the following day, bringing two candles. He lit the candles, placed one on each side of the image and then knelt down to pray. As he did so, much to his alarm, the Lion opened his mouth.

"You have a good heart, my son," said the Lion in a guttural tone of voice, "and I want to reward you. Come again at this time tomorrow and remember to bring a large bucket."

Trembling, the boy said that he would come and thanked the Lion for his kindness. Then he took his load of firewood to the village, sold it and from the proceeds, purchased a large wooden bucket. This he carried next day to the hillside corner where the Stone Lion was.

As usual he paid his reverence.

"Now you must act as I say," spoke the Lion. "Hold the bucket under my mouth and I will pour gold into it. As soon as the bucket is nearly full, you must tell me to stop, for on no account must a single piece of gold fall to the ground."

Tse-ring did exactly as he was told. He held the bucket under the Lion's mouth and lo! there issued a stream of gold pieces. When the bucket was three-quarter full, he called out to the Lion and in an instant the stream of gold ceased.

The youth bowed his head low to thank the giver for this generous gift and returned to his mother with the bucket. The poor woman was at first scared on seeing

so much gold, but when she had heard the whole story, she was extremely grateful.

The mother and son now settled down in comfort. They bought a big farmhouse and a large stock of cattle and sheep. They began to live in grandeur with many servants working for them in their house and fields.

News of the improved circumstances of his mother and brother soon reached Chamba-re who wondered how this had happened. Unable to contain his curiosity he decided to pay them a visit. One day, accompanied by his wife and taking a small piece of cloth as a present according to custom, he journeyed to his brother's farmhouse.

On arrival he was warmly welcomed by his mother and younger brother. After making the usual enquiries about each other's health and well-being, they conversed about various things in the course of which Tse-ring narrated the entire story of how he had come by his good fortune.

Having learnt what he wanted to know, the elder brother could hardly wait to return home, so impatient was he to make preparations for his trip to the mountain deity. That same evening, on reaching his place, he went to the market and after a prolonged search, bought the largest bucket available and two candles. He spent a sleepless night, going out every now and then to watch for the first signs of daybreak.

As soon as it was dawn, he rose, picked up the bucket and set out on his way to the hillside. Following his brother's directions to the minutest detail, he reached without difficulty the corner where the Stone Lion stood in his stone-carved majesty.

The young man paused. For a few minutes he kept staring at the awe-inspiring picture before him. Then he lit the candles on either side of the figure and prostrating himself on the ground, prayed to the Lion for good fortune.

All at once the Lion spoke. "Who are you?"

Chamba-re shivered.

"I am the brother of the boy to whom you gave so much wealth," he replied in humble tones. "I have come to you with the prayer that you show the same kindness to me."

"Very well," said the Lion. "Hold the bucket under my mouth from which will flow a stream of gold. But be careful. When the bucket is nearly full, you must inform me. If a single piece of gold falls to the ground, you will meet with misfortune."

Chamba-re held the bucket under the Lion's mouth and in a moment there poured down a gentle, jingling stream of gold pieces. With fascination he watched what seemed to him a divine vision. He thought to himself, "How rich I will be! Oh, how rich! Everybody will envy me."

Absorbed in such reflections, the avaricious fellow lost count of time. The bucket was filled to the brim with gold but he forgot to tell the Lion to stop. Suddenly one piece fell to the ground. As it touched the earth, the stream stopped.

"You fool! What have you done?" shouted the Lion in a hoarse voice. "Now the biggest piece of gold has stuck in my throat. Pull it out immediately with your hand."

Chamba-re drew near and thrust his hand into the

Lion's mouth, hoping to extract one more big piece of gold. Then the Lion closed his jaws and once again turned to stone. In vain did Chamba-re struggle to release his arm; it was caught in a vicious grip of the Lion's stone-jaws. He glanced at the bucket. To his horror he found it contained not gold pieces but stones and dust.

He wept bitterly. In his greed he had lost his gold and now he was stranded in a lonely, isolated spot without a sign of life around. The surrounding bare rocks loomed menacingly over him and he felt cold with fear. What if he should have to remain thus for days! Who would think of looking for him here?

Towards evening Chamba-re's wife grew anxious about her husband. He had told her that he would return before nightfall. But night passed; so did the whole of next day. Still he had not returned. Now she was sick with apprehension. She went to Tse-ring, told him where her husband had gone and begged him for help.

Tse-ring guessed what must have happened. He made straight for the hill-side corner and found his brother, faint and limp, held tightly in the Lion's grip. He then knelt reverently before the Lion and beseeched him to have mercy on his brother.

"Ha, ha!" The Lion opened his mouth and laughed. Immediately Chamba-re withdrew his arm.

The two brothers embraced each other. Chamba-re was ashamed of his greed and repentant. He vowed never to be covetous again. Tse-ring who had a kindly, generous heart gave a part of his wealth to his brother so that they could both live in prosperity.

## *Adarsamukha*

**L**ONG LONG ago there was a monarch called King Ananda, renowned for his wisdom and the great love he had for his subjects.

King Ananda had five sons, the youngest of whom was named Adarsamukha, meaning Mirror-face, because his face resembled a mirror. Prince Adarsamukha was gentle and modest, and endowed with great intelligence but his older brothers were rash, rude and ill-tempered. King Ananda knew his sons well and as time passed and the princes grew up to be young men, the king became increasingly worried about the question of succession to the throne. According to the law, the eldest prince had the right to succeed upon his father's death, but King Ananda realised that his four older sons lacked the ability to rule well. In the event of anyone of them becoming king, there would be chaos in a very short time and consequent misery for the people.

This worry preyed on the king's mind day and night. He wished very much to invest Prince Adarsamukha with the sovereign power during his lifetime but this he could not do without inviting the reproach of all his kinsmen and ministers for overlooking the claims of his older sons. How was he to solve the problem?

At last he thought of a way out. So he called all his ministers one day and talked to them.

"Listen carefully, O chieftains! I am now an old man and do not have long to live. I am very anxious to make sure that the prince who succeeds me will be good and wise so that peace and prosperity will continue to reign in the land. For many days I have thought over this problem and now I have decided that when I die, you will put all my sons to a test. The prince who passes the test, him must you choose as your king."

The ministers stood in deferential silence and were moved to see how tired and aged their king looked. And yet, despite his frailness, how dearly he loved his people.

"The test is simple," continued the king. "You will ask each of the princes to guess by his insight certain objects, namely, the inner treasure, the outer treasure, the treasure of the tree-top, the treasure of the hill-top and the treasure of the river shore."

A few years later King Ananda died. Thereupon the ministers proceeded to act as they had been directed. All five princes were called and beginning with the eldest, each was asked to guess the objects to be divined by his insight. None of the four older princes could guess the objects. Instead they lost their temper and

abused the ministers for their impudence. Finally came the turn of Prince Adarsamukha.

"If the question is which is the inner treasure," replied the prince, "that is the treasure which is inside the threshold. If the question is which is the outer treasure, that is the treasure which is outside the threshold. If the question is which is the treasure of the tree-top, that is the treasure which is at the spot on which the tree planted by the king casts its shadow at midday. If the question is which is the treasure of the hill-top, that is the treasure which is under the stone at the bottom of the tank wherein the king used to take delight. If the question is which is the treasure of the river shore, that is the treasure which is at the end of the channel by which the water flows out of the house."

The assembly listened with speechless wonder as the young prince answered each question clearly. At the end of it there was general applause and rejoicing and the ministers crowned Adarsamukha their king.

King Adarsamukha ruled for many years and achieved fame far and wide for his justice and greatness. It is said that in his reign not only the people, but even birds and animals living within his dominions enjoyed the king's protection. Many stories are told of the problems referred to him and how he helped to resolve them.

In a certain place among the hills there once lived a Brahman named Dandin who borrowed one day a pair of oxen from a householder. After ploughing his land, he went to the householder's house to return the oxen. Arriving there, Dandin saw that the householder was having his dinner, and not wishing to disturb him, he led the oxen to their stall. After some time it

happened that the oxen left their stall and sauntered out by another door. When the householder finished his meal, he went to the stall and to his surprise found that the oxen had disappeared. Then he raised a big hue and cry and rushed to Dandin's house.

"Where are my oxen?" demanded the householder.

"Didn't you see that I brought them back to your house? I left them in the stall," replied Dandin in great perplexity.

Thereupon the householder seized Dandin by the neck and accused him of stealing the oxen. Dandin protested but in vain.

"You must return me the oxen," said the indignant man.

"But I have not stolen them," repeated Dandin. "You can search my house if you want."

By now a crowd of neighbours had collected.

"Why do you not go to King Adarsamukha?" they advised. "He is wise and will settle the affair for you, separating right from wrong."

Both Dandin and the householder agreed with the suggestion and set out on their way.

Halfway they came to a deep river which a carpenter was fording, with his axe held in his mouth. Dandin called out to the carpenter and asked if the river was deep or shallow.

"The river is deep," replied the carpenter, and as he did so, the axe dropped from his mouth into the river. The carpenter was furious and blamed Dandin for the loss of his axe.

"You have flung my axe into the water," said the carpenter.



"No, I have not."

"You are the cause of my losing the axe. I will take you to King Adarsamukha who will settle this business for us."

So the three men proceeded on their way to King Adarsamukha's court. After a while they passed some gazelles who asked Dandin where he was going.

"I am being taken by these people to King Adarsamukha."

"Then please take charge of a commission from us," said the gazelles, "and ask the king what is the reason why we find no pleasure in any other place than this, even though other places possess meadows and green grass."

The men went on farther, and came across a snake who stopped them to ask where they were going. On being told that they were going to King Adarsamukha, the snake requested them to take charge of a commission from him. "Please ask the king why I creep out of my hole with ease, but creep back into it with pain."

At last the group reached the court. After they had paid reverence with their heads at the king's feet, they told him the reason of their visit.

The householder began by relating the story of his dispute with Dandin. The king listened intently and then asked, "Did you see the oxen or did you not?"

"Yes, O King," replied the householder.

"Did Dandin drive your oxen into the stall?"

"Yes, O King."

"Then why did you not tie them up?"

The householder made no reply.

"This then is my verdict," said the king. "As Dandin

did not inform you where he was taking the oxen, his tongue shall be cut off. But as you saw the oxen and yet did nothing to secure them, your eyes shall be put out."

The householder said, "In the first place I lose my oxen, and now my eyes are to be put out. Sooner than that, I prefer not to win my suit against Dandin."

Next it was the carpenter's turn to state his case.

"Why did you speak in the middle of the river when you were holding an axe in your mouth?" asked the king.

The carpenter remained silent.

"For speaking without thought, you should forfeit your tongue," continued the king. "As for Dandin, he asked a question when he could see clearly how deep the river was. Since he has no use for his eyes, he must forfeit them."

"Rather than lose my tongue, I prefer not to win my suit against Dandin," said the carpenter.

Now Dandin rose to execute the two commissions he had been entrusted with. The first of these was from the gazelles.

The king said, "Tell the gazelles that there stands a tree on that spot from the top of which honey drops down. Thereby are the meadows and the grass rendered sweet. But as the bees have now been driven out, they ought not to tarry longer on the spot, otherwise they will suffer pain beyond measure."

The other commission was from the snake.

The king replied, "When hungry and in a state of collapse, the snake can easily creep out of his hole. But after he has partaken of food which he consumes

beyond his need, he can creep back into the same hole only with pain. Tell him that if he can content himself with just that much food as is fit for him, he will fare better."

Then Dandin, the householder and the carpenter rose to thank the king and after paying their respects, took their leave.

## *The Jackal Settles a Dispute*

ON THE banks of a river there, once lived two otters. They were good friends, sharing a common dwelling and helping each other in every way. Perfect harmony prevailed between them because each placed his companion's interest before his own. Usually they went out together in search of food. On some days, when the wind was calm and the river flowed in soft glistening ripples, they used to enter the water and bring fish ashore. But by the time they came out on dry land, the fish had dived back into the water and gone.

This happened so often that the otters were in a state of hopeless despair. So one day they took counsel together and decided that in future one of them should go into the water while the other remained on land to hold the fish.

The new method worked very well. The otter which

## THE JACKAL SETTLES A DISPUTE

went into the water frightened the fish and drove them ashore while the other on land killed them. Thus they were able to collect a big heap of fish.

"Let's now divide the heap," said one otter.

"You must divide it," said the other.

"I will not, because I am afraid of making a mistake."

Neither of the otters was prepared to divide for fear of making an uneven division. At this stage when things had reached an impasse, a jackal happened to pass by. Seeing the otters look despondent before a big heap of fish which made his own heart flutter with excitement, he asked, "O nephews, why are you so absorbed in thought?"

"Uncle, we have caught this fish and now we do not know what to do."

To the jackal this reply made no sense.

"Then why do you not divide it?"

"Because we are afraid of acting unrighteously."

"Would you like me to undertake the division for you?" asked the jackal.

With eagerness the otters agreed and, in reply to his questions, explained to him the method they had employed in catching the fish. Then Mukhara<sup>1</sup> took aside the otter who had gone into the water and said to him, "Really speaking, you had a light job to do. The otter who has to be on dry land is exposed to danger from fissures, tree-stumps, thorns, wild beasts, and men. Besides, if he were not to kill the fish, of what use would your frightening them be? In short, as the whole catch is entirely the other otter's work, you must be content with what he gives you and raise no objection."

<sup>1</sup> One who intervenes to settle a point of dispute.

The poor otter was overawed by the jackal's reasoning. He did not say a word; he simply bent his head in assent.

Now the jackal went to the other otter and taking him aside, spoke in the same manner. "Listen, my dear. I do not want to belittle your work, but the otter who has got to go into the water is in danger from waves and waters, from tortoises, alligators and crocodiles. Besides, if he had not frightened the fish, how could you have killed them? In short, all this collection of the fish is the other otter's work. Therefore you must be content with what your companion gives you."

Smitten to the heart by the jackal's words, the otter could only nod his head.

So Mukhara divided the heap into three parts, one containing the heads of the fish, another their tails, and the third the rest of their bodies.

"The goer on land receives the tails, and the goer into the depths the heads; he who is conversant with the law receives the middle parts."

So saying, the jackal seized his share and made his way home. When his mother saw the fish he had brought, she clapped her hands with delight.

"My son, where did you get such a plentiful catch?"

The jackal narrated his encounter with the otters and how he had fooled them. He recited the verse:

"Even as the king's cat that knows neither right nor wrong, in that fools strive with one another, gains thereby, so shall we obtain food in plenty."

*Vietnam*







## *White for the Stork*

**W**HEN THE world began, all birds were white. Now these birds were of two kinds—aggressors and victims—and they could not live in peace with each other. The former killed and devoured the latter, who could not do anything to protect themselves because as all birds were white, it was not possible to distinguish the enemy. This created a serious situation. The good birds grew less in number each day and the bad ones increased. This could mean that eventually all birds would disappear from the earth, since the fighters would start destroying themselves when there were no others to attack.

So the elders among the victim-birds held a meeting and decided to petition heaven.

“Please Heaven,” said the representatives of the good birds in great grief after they had told their story, “you must help us. We love this world of green fields,

flowing rivers and white mountains. We want to live in this beautiful world."

Heaven heard the complaint with sympathy and sent its representative to the earth. The representative returned and suggested that the only way to solve the problem was to give different colours to birds.

The parliament in heaven duly debated the suggestion. Some members said that as different colours were not all equally pretty, this would create differences and heart burning among birds. But most of the members upheld the suggestion, and eventually a commission came down to earth to implement it.

For many weeks the commission was busy holding talks and deciding about colours for birds. The aggressor-birds tried to be difficult but they could not defy the government of heaven.

At last the work was over. On the day of departure the chairman got up to make his last speech. At this moment there was a sudden disturbance in the ranks of the birds and there stood the stork, panting and breathless, who had just arrived. He had been asked to appear before the commission the day before. But he came now, looking shamefaced and mumbling inaudible words. The chairman asked him sternly why he was late.

"Sir," replied the stork, his eyes fixed on the ground, "I was very tired from work when I went to sleep. As soon as I awoke I came hurrying here."

But the stork was telling a lie, his voice was shaking and on his forehead were beads of perspiration. The chairman demanded the truth for he could not tolerate such contempt of heavenly law. The stork broke down

and confessed that he had been stealing shrimps.

"What? Stealing?" cried the chairman, his face red with anger. "Instead of answering our summons, you go stealing! You must be punished."

The chairman looked towards the other members of the commission and they nodded their heads.

"We will not give you any colour," said the chairman. "You shall remain white so that you are visible all the time."

Since then, the stork has had white feathers.

## *The One-Legged Ducks*

**D**UCKS HAVE a funny habit of sleeping with one leg lifted. For this curious phenomenon there is an interesting explanation.

When God created the world the ducks, who numbered four in his creation, had only one leg each. This proved to be a serious handicap. They could not walk easily, nor find food adequately because hopping on one leg soon tired them. They were consequently unhappy and morose all the time.

One day they met and discussed their common problem. They had reached a point where life had become unbearable, and rather than continue as they were, they were prepared to forego their existence or induce heaven to grant them two legs. So they put their heads together to draft a petition.

But here they found themselves at sea. They had no idea how to present their case. Having made out a

number of drafts, all equally confusing, they decided to seek the help of Mr. Chicken, of whose intelligence they had a high opinion.

So the four ducks visited Mr. Chicken who was greatly flattered to be singled out for this honour. Outwardly, however, he kept a straight face and listened to their complaint with a knitted brow. He agreed to help them and retired to a corner to draft the petition.

When the petition was ready, the ducks took the document gratefully from his hands and went into a huddle to decide how they were going to carry it to heaven. The way to heaven was long and tedious, and handicapped as they were, none of them could have made the arduous journey. They sat and argued till it seemed to them that they would have to give up the whole idea in despair.

All the while Mr. Chicken sat watching them from a distance and listening to their discussion. Seeing their plight he now approached the group. He was a well-meaning fellow and could not bear to see the distress of the ducks.

"There is," he suggested, looking down his beak sagaciously, "a pagoda not far from here. The god of the place could convey your petition to heaven."

A flicker of light came into the ducks' eyes. But it soon died out.

"How are we to reach the god of the pagoda? Who will admit us to his presence?" they asked.

"I can give you a letter to him," said the helpful Mr. Chicken and wrote out a suitably worded epistle for them.

The ducks quacked loudly to express their gratitude

and taking the letter, proceeded to the pagoda.

It was not long before they arrived at their destination, panting heavily. At the entrance they suddenly heard a loud, imperious voice from inside, wanting to know why the temple's incense-burner had eight legs instead of the normal four.

"Remove the extra four legs immediately," commanded the imperious voice.

Hope surged in the ducky breast. They hurried in—no one dared to stop them because of the letter they carried—and entered a hall where they saw the god seated on a pedestal, still frowning in anger.

"Your lordship," said one duck who was more spirited than the others, "we have brought you a letter from our friend er...your friend Mr. Chicken, with our petition. It is about our need for four legs. We have only one leg each." It stuttered out the words quickly and then stopped, too nervous to explain any more.

The god continued to look unsmiling at the ducks. He made no reply. The ducks did not know whether he had understood them. At last, the youngest of them, more desperate than the others, spoke up.

"Your lordship, you spoke just now of removing the four extra legs of Mr. Incense-burner..."

At this remark the god broke into laughter. His look softened and he was moved to see their plight. He bent down and picked up the incense-burner.

"Here," he said, removing the four legs and handing them to the ducks, "keep them carefully. They are made of gold and very precious."

The ducks were ready to promise anything. They

took the legs, bowed and thanked their benefactor, and left in haste.

From that day the ducks have not had any more trouble. With two legs each, they can walk, run and play about easily. And whenever they go to sleep, they do not forget to pull up the leg given them by the pagoda god so that nobody can steal it.

## *The Buffalo Boy*

ON A CLEAR night, when a full moon rises majestically in the sky, the children gaze upward and sing:

“Cuoi, Cuoi, the dream-time boy,  
Alone, alone on the moon,  
Playing with the stars in the lost twilight,  
Till Late has become Soon.”

Cuoi is the name of the man who went up to the moon long, long ago. The children say that they can see his solitary figure in the moon, sitting all alone at the foot of a banyan tree.

Cuoi was a buffalo boy who came of a very poor family. He worked for a rich man who owned large fields, a buffalo and a number of pigs. Cuoi used to look after the buffalo in the fields, prepare food for the



pigs, collect firewood in the forest and cook dinner for his master. For all this the master used to give him food to eat and a cloth to cover himself with.

For many years he worked thus and with the passage of time, grew up from a boy into a man. He married and settled down to a happy life with a family but he continued to work for the same master.

One day, while gathering wood in the forest, Cuoi saw a tiger-cub come frolicking up to him. He picked it up and caressed it. He was still holding it when he heard a frightful growl close by. Looking up, he saw through an opening in the trees the mother of the cub searching for her lost one. In fear he threw the cub down and scrambled up a tree to hide.

Sitting on the branch of a tree, he saw the tigress come crashing through the undergrowth and approach her child. She stood over the body and felt it with her paws but the cub did not move. It had become unconscious from the violence of the fall. The mother growled again and so fiercely that the sound shook the trees around. Cuoi, hiding above, held his breath with difficulty.

Then a strange thing happened. The tigress walked to a stream not far from the spot, gathered leaves from a small banyan tree which she washed in water, chewed them and applied them to the cub's head. Almost at once the cub stood up and jumped about as if nothing had happened.

After the tigress and her little one had gone, Cuoi came down and made his way to the banyan tree. He collected a handful of leaves and bent his steps homeward. On the way he saw a dog lying dead in the dust.

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

Cuoi chewed the leaves as the tigress had done, and applied them to the dog's head. Within a few minutes the dog came to life and bounded away.

Cuoi now realised that the leaves were not only healing, they had the unique gift of bringing the dead back to life. So he went back to the stream, dug out the whole tree from its roots and carried it home. There he replanted it in his yard and cautioned his wife not to throw refuse and dirty water where it was planted.

"Otherwise," he said to his wife, joking, "the tree will fly away to the sky."

Little did he imagine that the joke would actually come true! For, like all women who do exactly what their husbands tell them not to do. Cuoi's wife promptly forgot what her husband had said. Nor could she understand what all the fuss was about.

"What a thing to do!" she thought. "Why bring a tree here when it was growing so well in a forest?"

One day when Cuoi had gone to the fields, she cleaned her house and deposited the entire refuse around the tree. Hardly was her back turned when, slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, the tree began to pull itself out and make towards the sky. Cuoi's words, lightly spoken, were coming true.

Cuoi returned from the fields in the evening and saw, to his utter disbelief, the tree floating away. It took him some time to understand what it meant. Then he ran after it as if he were mad and just managed to catch hold of its roots. But instead of the tree coming down he himself was carried up.

After many hours the tree and Cuoi reached a strange world illuminated by the moon. Cuoi planted the tree

there. This time he could not trust it to anyone else's care. He himself sat at the foot of the tree to guard it.

And there he has sat, year after year, waiting patiently for it to grow into a big tree. He knows that one day Late must become Soon.

## *The Bridge Across the Silver River*

*I*N THE seventh month of every year—that is, July—the monsoon visits Vietnam. The seventh month is the month of the Nguu, and the rain is called the Nguu rain. A visitor to the countryside at this time of year would also notice that the crows are absent. The air is conspicuously free of their loud “caw, caw, caw”; there is rain, constant rain; and a strange quiet prevails.

The peasants go about their work and say that the crows have flown up to the heavens to make the bridge which enables two erring gods, Nguu Lang and Chuc Nu, to cross the Silver River—or, the Milky Way—and meet after a year's separation. The gods live on the two banks of the river, meeting only once a year as ordained by the Emperor.

## THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE SILVER RIVER

This is how it happened.

Chuc Nu was the most beautiful of the daughters of the Emperor of Jade.<sup>1</sup> Beside being endowed with beauty she was also intelligent and hard-working. Every morning she would go to work on her loom on the banks of the Silver River, for it was she who clothed the *tien*, the fairies that twinkled in the Emperor's court. All day she would be there, her feet pressed on the pedals and her hands dexterously moving the shuttle back and forth. Absorbed thus in her work she was a picture to behold! The drone of the loom mingled with the whisper of sunlit ripples of the river, producing music that was like diamonds in a silver bowl.

To the banks of the shining river came every day a cowherd named Nguu Lang who looked after the Emperor's cattle. While Chuc Nu worked, he would watch with enchanted eyes the beautiful dark-eyed girl intent on her work. She would look up every now and again and observe the handsome cowherd gazing wondrously at her. In time the princess herself began to return his admiration.

When the Emperor of Jade came to know of his daughter's love for the cowherd, he was not angry. Instead, he showed understanding and gave them permission to marry but on one condition, that they would continue to do their work even after marriage. Chuc Nu and Nguu Lang promised that and they were duly married.

But after marriage they were so happy with each other that they neglected their work, spending their time in roaming the celestial fields hand in hand. The loom

<sup>1</sup> In Vietnamese legends God is referred to as the Emperor of Jade.

languished in a forgotten corner, and the cattle wandered here and there at will.

The Emperor's wrath was great on seeing this neglect, more so because it meant a broken promise solemnly given.

"Where are they?" the Emperor demanded.

The young people came and stood before him, not daring to look up.

"Do you remember your promise?" he asked in a kindly voice. "For how many days have you not worked?"

The truth of the matter was that they had not worked at all since their marriage. They remained silent.

The Emperor shook his head.

"I take a serious view of your conduct and must punish you regardless of the fact that you are my children."

Accordingly he separated Chuc Nu and Nguu Lang and ordered them to stay on the opposite banks of the Silver River. He further ordered them to resume the work they had been assigned. But he tempered the severity of his punishment by promising that they would be allowed to meet once a year, on the seventh day of July.

Having given his word the Emperor was now at a loss to know how he would keep it because there was no means to cross the river. No bridge connected the two banks and no boats navigated in its swift waters. He pondered over the matter and decided at last that a bridge should be constructed across the river. For this he summoned a large number of carpenters from the earth.

## THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE SILVER RIVER

The carpenters came, feeling mighty proud to be the chosen few called to heaven. Eagerly they started their work. With their tools they hammered away unceasingly at the large blocks of building materials.

Alas, their enthusiasm was but short-lived! Soon their old habits began to assert themselves. They formed a recreation club, supposedly for spending their leisure after work, but where, even during work hours they would sit and gossip and smoke. The inhabitants of heaven saw these goings-on and reported them to the Emperor.

Unable to believe that the carpenters could be so impertinent, the Emperor decided to go and see things for himself. So he paid a surprise visit, and was appalled to see the scene he saw. Masses of wood were lying untended all over the place while the carpenters sat lolling about, chatting and smoking. There was no sign of the bridge.

On seeing the Emperor, someone shouted, "Run!" Then there was a scramble, and in confusion the carpenters ran hither and thither, picked up their tools and tried to pretend that they were concentrating on their work. It was too late. The Emperor had seen the whole thing. Without saying a word he went back.

On seventh of July, the bridge was not even half completed. But the Emperor was determined to keep his promise. He called all the carpenters to the palace.

"Did you not know that the bridge had to be completed by today?" the Emperor asked.

There was no reply, only a long, embarrassed silence.

"Do you have anything to say?"

Not a word from the carpenters!

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

The Emperor ordered the guards to lead the carpenters away. When the latter turned to go, they found that their arms had become black wings and were flapping. They had been changed to crows.

As the procession began to move, the Emperor told them that they would have to come every seventh of July and put their heads together so that Nguu Lang and Chuc Nu could walk across the Milky Way and meet after a year's separation.

For years Nguu Lang and Chuc Nu have been meeting each other in July. Every time they meet they weep for joy. When the time comes for them to part after a brief reunion, they weep again for sorrow. That is why there is so much rain in the month of the Nguu.



## *The Legend of Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh*

**T**HE DELTA area in North Vietnam is plagued by recurring flood and rain and thunder. This is a yearly phenomenon, and so the people of this area live in a state of perpetual uncertainty. When the weather is calm they often get together and say that if King Hung had not married his daughter to Son Tinh, they would have been spared all this havoc.

King Hung, eighteenth in the first royal dynasty of Vietnam, had a beautiful daughter, My Nuong, who was known for her charm and beauty all over the east. When she grew up, princes from every kingdom sought her hand in marriage. But the king did not think any of them suitable for his daughter and so refused them all.

It happened one day that two suitors arrived at the

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palace almost at the same time. One of them introduced himself as Son Tinh (god of mountains) and the other as Thuy Tinh (god of water). They were duly presented to the king.

The king received them separately and he was greatly impressed by both. The two suitors were equally powerful and handsome. Son Tinh impressed the monarch with his sublime look and an air of quiet, aloof dignity. Thuy Tinh had a strikingly bright face and his personality conveyed great strength.

After he had seen the two gods, the king found himself in a fix. How was he to choose between the two? For the present he had let himself into a very embarrassing situation by asking the two suitors to come again the next day with the wedding presents, as was the custom of the land.

The king went into deep thought and turned the question over and over again in his mind. After much reflection he decided that he would give the princess's hand to the one who arrived first with the presents.

Son Tinh was the first to arrive, bringing presents of jade, ivory, gold and silver of exquisite design such as the king had not seen before. Standing firm by his decision, the king welcomed Son Tinh as his son-in-law to be and gave him his daughter in marriage. Without losing time, Son Tinh took the princess away to his house in the Tan Vien mountain, in Son Tay province of North Vietnam.

When Thuy Tinh, the god of water, arrived at the palace later in the day, with no less rare presents, he found the princess gone. He felt so slighted that he

## *THE LEGEND OF SON TINH AND THUY TINH*

swore that he would not rest till he had wrested My Nuong from Son Tinh.

He fumed with anger and commanded the wind and the sea to strike.

"Sweep on!" he roared, and at his first wrathful roar whirlwinds suddenly swept out of the sea, destroying everything on the land. Immense areas were flooded. Sea fauna became soldiers marching in formations against the mountain home of Son Tinh.

But Son Tinh was also a god, and no less powerful.

"We shall not surrender," he said and changed the highland fauna into soldiers who defended the mountain home, fighting fiercely for their master. Dreadful battles were fought. Storms tore in from the seas and crashed screaming against the Tan Vien. The mountain god stood unflinching against the battering and in his turn broke the storm into rivulets which helplessly flowed back to the sea. The number of human beings who perished in the holocaust and the rice-paddies destroyed was incalculable.

After some weeks there was a truce, for both sides were tired and wanted time to gather fresh strength.

Next year Thuy Tinh launched an attack again. The result was the same. The forces on both sides fought relentlessly and the people below suffered enormous havoc.

To this day the struggle has not ended. Both gods are equally powerful and determined and neither of them will give in. Thus the poor people on earth continue to suffer and ask with a melancholy nod of their heads, "Why did King Hung marry his daughter to Son Tinh?"

## *The Bird of the Golden Rocks*

ONCE UPON a time there were two brothers who had lost their parents when they were both children. They grew up together, looking after each other; but when they came of age and it was time to divide the heritage, the elder brother took the best part of it and gave only the hut and a plant growing in front of it to his younger brother.

The younger brother gratefully received what was given to him. He was gentle and good-hearted and it was not in his nature to complain. In course of time he married and settled down to a happy life. He used to go to work everyday while his wife tended the plant and looked after the hut. Both were content though life was hard for them and a constant struggle to make two ends meet.

In time the plant grew big and sprouted little seeds of fruit. The couple's happiness was great as they

watched with eager patience the tree grow and blossom with ripening fruit. But their delight soon turned to alarm when they saw that a huge bird had made a practice of coming and eating off the tree's fruit before it was ripe enough to be plucked. They could do nothing to stop this ravage. If they threw stones at the bird, it would hurt the fruit. So they stood beneath the tree and watched with anguish the bird devouring its fruit meal.

One day the bird happened to glance down and saw the couple looking up at it. It stopped eating and its expression changed to one of human amazement. It talked to them.

"What is the matter? Why do you stand and look at me like that?"

For a moment the younger brother and his wife were too stunned to speak. They continued to look stupefied. "What a strange bird!" they thought. The man found his voice at last.

"This is our tree and we have looked after it so that it could grow big and give us fruit some day. But now you come and eat the fruit, and we don't get anything."

"Do not worry," replied the bird. "For every fruit I consume I shall pay you three ounces of gold. Tomorrow you bring a bag to hold all the gold you want."

The wife stitched a bag and kept it ready. Next day the bird came, and after eating the fruit, came down and beckoned the younger brother to climb on to its back. Then it flew, far and far away, over hills and valleys and over an immense blue sea of glittering waters that seemed never to end. At last they arrived at an island where the bird alighted. There around

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him the man saw rocks of gold and diamonds and precious stones such as he had never imagined could exist anywhere.

"Take as many of them as you like," the bird said to him.

The younger brother filled his bag. Then the bird carried him back home.

Now the couple became rich. They moved to a splendid house not far from the hut and bought a big farm. Then the younger brother paid a visit to his elder brother and invited him to a feast.

"My dear brother, I have bought a new house and a farm. Please come and see my new home."

The elder brother and his wife had never visited the younger brother before. He was too poor to matter. Now they came because they wanted to see how rich he was and how he had come by his riches.

At the entrance to the house they looked about them in awe at the magnificent mansion and the large flourishing farm. Inside, they were served with the choicest dishes but the food would not go down their throats because they were consumed with jealousy and could hardly wait to hear how the younger brother had amassed so much wealth in so short a time.

The younger brother told them the whole story exactly as it had happened. The elder couple exchanged glances and whispered to each other every few minutes. Then they proposed to the younger brother that they would exchange all they had for the hut and the tree.

"You can take the hut and the tree," replied the younger brother.

The very next day the elder brother and his wife left

## THE BIRD OF THE GOLDEN ROCKS

their home and moved into the hut. They looked after the tree with tender care. A year passed and the tree bore fruit again. Again the bird came and ate up the fruit. The elder couple was delighted and they came and stood beneath the tree. The bird saw them and spoke to them as it had done before.

"Is this your tree?"

"Yes," the man replied.

"I shall pay you for every fruit I eat," the bird promised. "Tomorrow you bring a bag to take all the gold you want."

The greedy couple made two bags instead of one. Next day when the bird came, both expressed a wish to go to the island of golden rocks. The couple ran wild on seeing so much gold and so many jewels and filled their bags till they were bursting at the seams. Then they began the flight homeward.

Halfway, when they were flying over the sea, the bird was unable to support so much weight on its back. It tilted the entire burden into the sea and came to the tree to eat the fruit in peace.

## *Betel Leaf and Areca Nut*<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE CHEWING of areca nut wrapped in a betel leaf is a custom familiar in most of South East Asia. Betel is a traditional offering at festivals and when friends offer it to each other it is an expression of good wishes and hospitality. In Vietnam there is an old saying: "Betel is the beginning of all conversation and of love," and they tell a story of how it was first discovered.

Long ago, in the reign of King Hung the Fourth, there lived two brothers called Tan and Lang. They were both intelligent and good-looking and loved each other deeply. They were students of the same teacher named Luu.

Now Luu had a lovely daughter who often met the brothers when they came to her father's house to study. Many times she would come and sit with them during

<sup>1</sup> Areca nut wrapped in a betel leaf is called 'paan' in India.



instruction. After some time she fell in love with Tan, the older of the two brothers. When Luu heard of it, he raised no objection and immediately arranged the marriage of his daughter with Tan. The wedding was celebrated with pomp and ceremony by the entire town, for Luu was a highly respected man in his community. With everyone's blessings the couple embarked on a life of love and happiness.

As days passed Tan and his wife became more and more absorbed in each other. Lang who was greatly attached to his brother and had never been separated from him in his life began to feel neglected. Gradually he sensed a coolness in Tan's attitude towards himself and this pained him so much that he lost interest in everything. He began to avoid company and when alone by himself, he wept bitterly.

At last he could not bear to go on like this. One night he woke up suddenly. Tan and his wife were still asleep but Lang's heart was heavy with grief. He leaned out of the window. It was deadly still and dark. The shadows of the night offered him no comfort.

Lang left before dawn. He left quietly, leaving no word behind and walked towards the jungle. The jungle opened, he walked in, and the jungle closed. Lang walked on without resting till his feet bled, his stomach ached with hunger and his body grew weak from exhaustion. He came to a river bank where he stopped and thought of his brother with a sad longing. And he wept till he died. The gods, seeing all, changed him into a rock for his steadfast devotion to his brother. It was a big rock which could be seen above the trees in that lonely place where the only sound to

be heard was of the river whispering a continuous song.

After about two days Tan became aware of his brother's absence. He recalled suddenly with a sense of remorse that he had grown away from Lang. It was early morning and his wife was still asleep. Tan got up and went out to look for his brother.

But Lang was nowhere to be seen.

"Have you seen my brother?" he asked of some neighbours, but nobody knew. Tan walked on till he came to the jungle. The jungle opened, he walked in, and the jungle closed. "Lang, Lang," he kept calling, but his voice echoed back to him without an answer. He walked on till his feet were sore, his stomach ached with hunger and his voice grew hoarse. He followed the path that led him to a high rock on a river bank. Climbing up to the top of the rock, he stood and cried for his brother. And he wept till he died. The gods, seeing all, changed him into a tree straight and slender, with palms resembling an open fan. The river continued to whisper its song.

Tan's wife woke and found her husband gone. She called out his name and ran in panic all over the place, searching for him. Then she ran out and made for the jungle. The jungle opened, she stumbled in, and the jungle closed. She walked on, her eyes blinded with tears. She came to a river bank where she found a high rock on which stood a palm tree, straight and slender. She climbed up the rock and stood under the tree. And she wept till she died. The gods, seeing all, were touched by her loyalty to her husband, and changed her into a vine. The river continued to whisper its eternal song.

Many years later, an old man heard the tale of the brothers' love for each other and the wife's devotion to her husband. He came to this spot on the river bank and had a temple built to their memory. People came to this temple from many places to offer prayers.

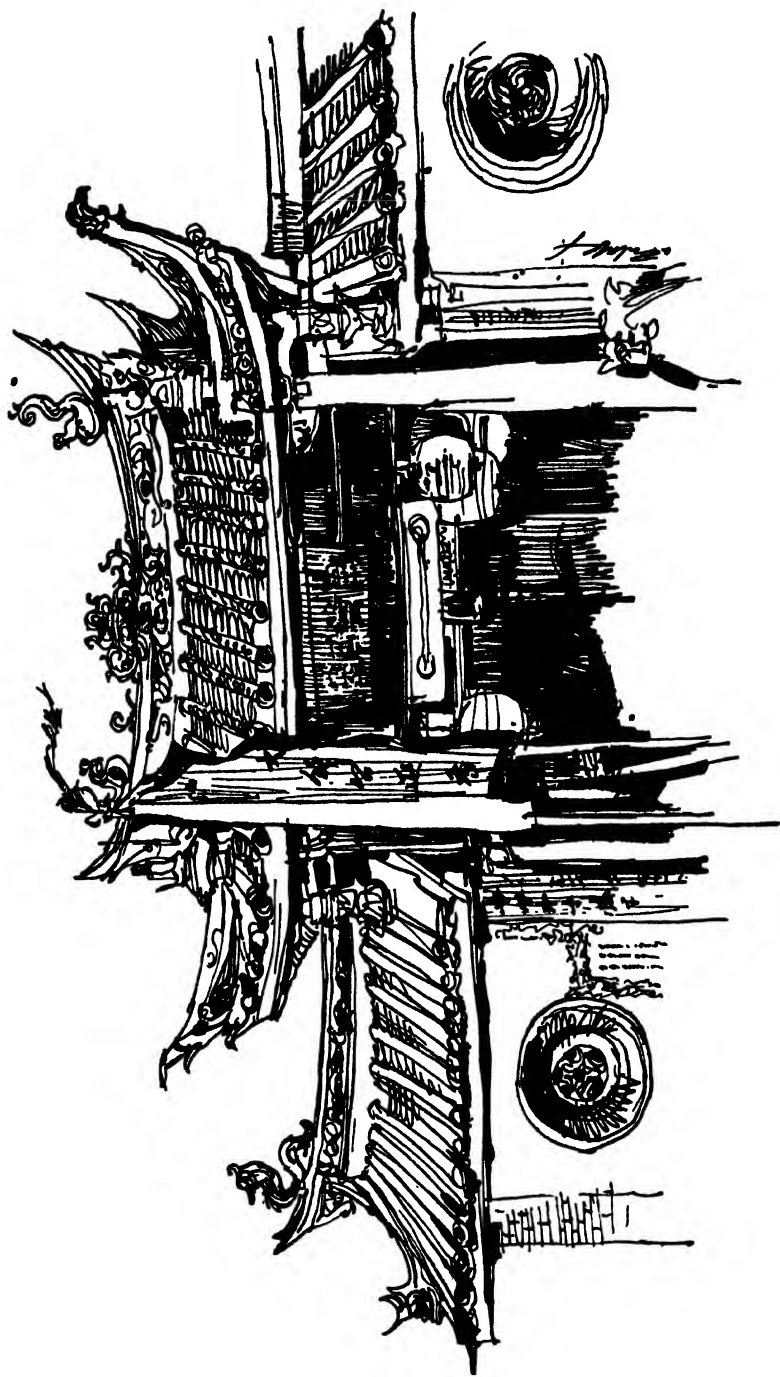
But after many years came a drought so severe that the river went dry, the plants withered and the grass turned yellow, then brown. Only the areca palm and the betel vine round it remained green and fresh, for true love and devotion never die. The tale of the wonder spread, and King Hung himself came to visit the temple, and stood astonished at the strange and beautiful sight.

The king ordered some leaves and nuts to be brought. He put the leaf in his mouth and then a nut and chewed them. The taste was different from anything he had known and his mouth felt fragrant with an unusual sweetness. After the king, his courtiers tried the mixture and they all relished the soothing, fragrant taste of it.

The king and his party returned, taking with them a large handful of leaves and nuts for their friends. And this is how the people first discovered betel leaf and areca nut and have tried the mixture from generation to generation—down to our time.



*Malaysia*



"Yes," the tiger replied. "We must do something to teach him a lesson."

"Well," said the elephant, "he is rather clever and not easy to get at. Let us try and shake him off that branch. If he falls to me I am to eat you. And if he falls to you, you are to eat me. We will make a wager of it."

The tiger agreed. "You shall try and menace him first."

"Au! Au! Au!" the elephant trumpeted with all his strength, and each time he trumpeted the monkey was scared. But he did not lose his nerve. He went jumping head foremost through the branches and did not fall to the ground. The elephant tried, and tried again, but Lotong the monkey did not fall.

"I have tried enough," he said to the tiger. "Now it is your turn, and if he falls to you, you shall eat me—if you really can make him fall!"

Then the tiger took a step forward and roared. He shortened his body as though he was about to take a spring and growled. Lotong the monkey lost his grip and leaped for another branch but his feet and hands were paralysed and would not grip. With a thud he fell at the tiger's feet. Triumphantly Rimau the tiger looked at the elephant.

"Well, friend Elephant, I suppose I may eat you now."

Crestfallen, the elephant nodded. "I admit you have won the wager. But I beg you to grant me just seven days' respite so that I may visit my wife and children and make my will."

The tiger granted the request and the elephant went home, bellowing and sobbing all the way.

## *THE ELEPHANT HAS A BET WITH THE TIGER*

When he was nearing his home, the elephant's wife hearing her husband's painful cries, came out and anxiously enquired what had happened. The children also came out and stood behind the mother in fright. Then Gajah told them about the wager between himself and the tiger.

"I was beaten and now friend Tiger says he is going to eat me. So I begged for leave to come home and see you. I have only seven days more to live," and he burst into sobs which shook his huge frame.

The whole family went into mourning and for seven days Father elephant kept sobbing aloud. He neither ate nor slept. The constant din scared the birds of the forest who left their nests to find a more peaceful habitation elsewhere. The animals of the neighbourhood grew sick of the noisy elephant family and wondered how long they would have to put up with such nuisance. At last this reached the ears of Pelanduk the Mousedeer who immediately came to see what was wrong.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked with concern. "Why do you keep bellowing throughout the night and throughout the day, and that too when the rains are upon us? You are far too noisy."

At this the elephant bellowed more loudly and wept as if his heart would break.

"This is no empty noise, friend Mousedeer," he said. "I have got into a dreadful scrape."

"What sort of a scrape?" enquired the Mousedeer.

And in a choking voice the elephant told him about the bet he had had with the tiger and of his approaching end.

The Mousedeer said, "I should feel exceedingly

sorrowful, exceedingly distressed to see you eaten up. But things being only as they are, I feel neither."

"If you will assist me, I will become your slave," said the elephant.

"If that is the case," said Pelanduk, "I will assist you. Go and look for a jar full of molasses."

The elephant went to the house of the palm-wine maker who, seeing the elephant enter through the door, fled by the back door in panic. Gajah looked around, removed the jar of molasses from its stand and brought it home.

"When does your promise expire?" asked Pelanduk.

"Tomorrow."

Next morning the Mousedeer came to the elephant's house and said, "Now pour the molasses over your back and let it spread and spread and run down your legs."

The elephant did as he was told.

"Now I shall get on to your back," continued the Mousedeer. "Let us start. As soon as I begin to lick the molasses on your back, bellow as loud as you can and writhe and wriggle as though you are in pain."

With the Mousedeer mounted on his back, the elephant proceeded. After he had gone some distance, the Mousedeer began to lick hard. Then the elephant writhed and wriggled, bellowing so loudly that Rimau the tiger, waiting near the clearing under a tree, looked up in astonishment and came running towards them. As he came near, he heard the Mousedeer exclaim, "A single elephant is nothing. If I could only catch your friend, that big fat tiger, it would be just enough to satisfy my hunger."

That was enough. The next moment the tiger was



in flight, running at a bound for his life.

Beyond the clearing, at the bend he almost collided with the black ape.

"Why are you running so hard, friend Tiger? Why so much noise just when the rains are upon us?"

"What do you mean by 'so much noise'?" asked the tiger impatiently. "What was that Thing upon the elephant's back which was devouring him? He was in great pain and the blood was streaming down his body in floods."

The ape mused awhile. "Could it be friend Mousedeer?"

"Certainly not," replied the tiger. "How could the Mousedeer eat the elephant or swallow me? The Thing said that it would like to catch a fat tiger like myself."

"Let us go and see," suggested the ape.

Together they went back, the tiger keeping a safe distance behind the ape. When they came within view of the elephant with the Mousedeer sitting astride his broad back, the latter shouted, "Hullo, Father Ape, this is a dog's trick indeed! You promised to bring me two tigers and you bring me only one. I refuse to accept it."

Hearing these words the tiger turned and went bounding through thickets and swamps till he could run no more. The ape followed him and ran up a tree.

"For shame, Father Ape!" cried the tiger. "You were trying to cheat me in order to pay your own debts. I shall not forgive you for this deception. Now, if you come down, I shall tear you to pieces."

Thus the tiger and the ape were set at enmity, and to this day the tiger is angry with the ape for trying to cheat him.

## *The Tiger and the Shadow*

*I*N A DEEP jungle there was a pond of clear cool water to which all the beasts of the forest came daily for a drink. After some time an old tiger came and dwelt near the pond. This spot suited him ideally for his hunt and he started killing one of the animals everyday for his food. As a result a feeling of terror spread among the animals, forcing some of them to leave the neighbourhood while others dared not come anywhere near the pond. The luxuriant forest which once hummed with the sound of singing birds and frolicking animals was fast becoming an eerie, deserted place.

Disturbed to see this state of affairs, Pelanduk the Mousedeer had an idea. He went to see the tiger.

“Why do you not permit me to bring you a beast everyday? That will save you the trouble of hunting for your food.”

The tiger regarded him for a few moments in thought.

"Yes, that is a good idea," he replied.

Pelanduk went off to make some arrangement with the beasts but he could not persuade any of them to go with him to the tiger.

"What sort of an arrangement is this? What difference does it make whether I am eaten today or tomorrow?" asked one of the animals.

"This jungle is no place for us now. We must leave it as soon as possible," said another.

Then the Mousedeer drew one of them aside and whispered something in its ear. The whisper went from ear to ear and before long the animals were jumping excitedly and saying, "Please take me with you. Please take me with you."

"Keep it a secret," Pelanduk counselled. "It must not reach the enemy's ears."

After three days the Mousedeer set off, taking with him Kuwis, the smallest of the flying squirrels. Approaching the pond, they saw the old tiger growling, and pacing up and down impatiently. The moment he saw them, he roared in anger.

"Why have you taken so long to come? Is this all you have brought me to eat after three days?"

Pelanduk took a deep breath and wiped his brow.

"Do you think it was our fault?" he exclaimed in a weak voice. "It has taken us three days to reach here and we are lucky to have reached you at all!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean it was difficult to get here. I could not bring you any of the bigger beasts because the way was

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blocked by a big, fat tiger with a flying squirrel sitting astride its muzzle."

"What tiger? I am the only tiger in these parts."

"This other tiger," continued the Mousedeer, "is a mighty big fellow and determined to eat up all the beasts. Very soon you will have nothing to eat."

The tiger frowned. He did not like this talk. "Let us go and drive it away."

"If we go like this, you have no chance against him," Pelanduk advised. "You will look mighty powerful if I sit astride your back and the flying squirrel sits upon your muzzle."

So the three set out in an impressive trio, the flying squirrel perched upon the tiger's muzzle and the Mousedeer mounted astride his back. When they reached the riverbank, the Mousedeer jumped down and going near the edge, pointed to the tiger's reflection in the water.

"Look! There is the fat tiger I saw."

The old tiger came closer and stared at his shadow in the water. He growled, and the image growled back at him. Enraged, the tiger sprang into the river to attack his adversary. The squirrel lightly jumped off while the old tiger fell into the water with a crash and was drowned.

For a long while Pelanduk stood, pensively watching the circles in the water. Then he turned and hastened to find the beasts to tell them the good news.

## *The Mousedeer and the Giant*

*I*T HAPPENED once that a huge giant came and made his home in a big forest. He was a ferocious being who indiscriminately preyed on all the animals living in the neighbourhood. As a result a feeling of panic spread among the inhabitants of the forest and drove them into hiding.

One day a group of them met in a secret place to discuss how they could get rid of the fearful monster who had made their life so miserable.

"Friends," said the wolf who spoke first, "nearly everyday one of us is killed by this horrible giant. Our children can't play about and we dare not roam the forest as we did before. We have lost our freedom and sense of peace. We must do something to stop this."

"I have heard that there is a Mousedeer named Pelanduk who is exceptionally clever and influential," said the rhino. "It seems that some time ago he was able

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to settle a dispute between a tiger and a goat. That is why, though small, he is called the lord of the forest. Let us take his help."

The deer interrupted the discussion.

"Don't you believe what the rhino says. As far as I know the Mousedeer is too clever and tricky. He is not reliable."

"No, no," broke in the wild buffalo, "what the rhino says is true. I have also heard the same story."

"If that is so," the porcupine shouted, "let us ask the wolf to go and see the Mousedeer. He might be able to solve our problem."

So the wolf set out in search of the Mousedeer. Taking obscure trails to avoid the giant, he came to a clearing where, in the distance he saw Pelanduk the Mousedeer sitting upon a white stone under the shade of a tree. The tree was covered with yellow blossom and looked like an umbrella. At the feet of the Mousedeer sat a tiger and a goat.

Pelanduk had also seen the wolf coming. Suddenly he looked up into the sky, knitting his brow in thought and exclaimed, "Listen, my friends, there will be someone coming to see me today."

"When will he be coming, oh lord?" asked the tiger.

"After a few minutes," the Mousedeer answered.

Exactly a few moments later the wolf arrived and inquired whether the lord of the forest would be pleased to grant him an audience.

The Mousedeer nodded and motioned him to come nearer. When the wolf stood before him, Pelanduk said, "Wolf, what brings you here?"

Bowing low the wolf said, "Lord, I have come here

on behalf of all the animals living in the forest to inform you about the problem we are faced with. You must have heard of the giant who has invaded this forest. Nearly half of us have been killed by him. Those who escaped have suffered broken legs and arms."

"Why didn't you inform me earlier," cried the Mousedeer in great anger. "I will catch the giant and finish him. You may go back to the animals and tell them that I am coming. Ask them to remain hiding till I've caught him."

The wolf went back and conveyed Pelanduk's words to the animals.

The next day the Mousedeer made for the place where the giant lived. Near the latter's dwelling he stopped and started to dig a hole. It was early morning, and no one was about. Pelanduk shouted, "Oh my wife and children, be quick and get into this hole. The world will end today. If you want to be saved, come quickly."

Hearing the Mousedeer's frantic cries, the giant rushed out of his home and came running towards Pelanduk.

"What are you saying about the world?"

"Haven't you heard that the world will end today, Giant? The sky will drop and hit the ground."

"What?" The giant's eyes grew big like saucers.

"Yes," continued the Mousedeer. "If you don't believe me, just look up at the sky. Can't you see it moving?"

Raising his eyes to the horizon the giant saw patches of windblown clouds moving in the sky. "Oh," he thought, "the sky is really falling." He began to tremble.

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"Please, Mousedeer," pleaded the giant, "have pity on me. Take me inside this hole with you."

"I am sorry, Giant. How can I take you when it is not even big enough for me and my family?"

"I shall help you," said the giant and immediately gave a hand in digging the hole deeper.

"Enough," said Pelanduk when the hole was fairly deep. "Now you get in first because you are big. Also I have to wait for my family to come."

Without thinking the giant got in. When he was way down up to his neck, Pelanduk handed him a big rope with a loop at one end. "Here. Put this loop around your knee and elbow while I bind the upper part of your body with it. You must be tired after all this hard work. This will make you feel better."

The giant did as he was told. When Pelanduk had finished binding him, the giant tried to move. He tried to free himself but without success. In alarm he cried out to the Mousedeer, but the latter had vanished. The giant began to shout like thunder.

Hearing the sky-rending noise the inhabitants of the forest came running out of their hiding to see what was wrong. When they arrived on the scene, they stared dumbfounded at the struggling giant. Suddenly Pelanduk appeared and jumped on to the giant's head, kicking it hard.

"This time it is your turn to die," said the Mousedeer. "So far you have been capturing others and killing them. Now you must suffer the same punishment."

Showered with blows from all the animals present, the giant lost consciousness. Then the animals walked away, leaving the monster to his fate.



## *THE MOUSEDEER AND THE GIANT*

“Please sit upon my back so that all can see you,” said the wild buffalo to the Mousedeer, lowering its head.

Sitting astride the wild buffalo Pelanduk led the procession back to the forest. When they reached the clearing where he lived, Pelanduk jumped down and went to sit upon his white stone under the yellow tree. From there he addressed the animals.

“All of you can go home now and live peacefully.”

“Yes, oh lord,” said all the animals, bowing their heads in respect. “May God be with you!”

## *Pelanduk's Judgement*

**T**WO PERSONS were once disputing over an axe. "Where is my axe which you borrowed from me last year?" one person said.

"I have told you that it was eaten up by insects," the other replied.

"That is not possible. You are telling a lie."

"I am not lying."

Thus they argued on and on. Failing to reach agreement they decided to go to King Solomon to settle their dispute.

The king listened to them. Each spoke earnestly and protested his innocence loudly. The king asked them if they could produce any witnesses. Both shook their heads. Thereupon he ordered his knight the wolf to summon the Mousedeer for advice.

The Mousedeer came promptly and presented himself before the king. The king told him the whole story

of the dispute and asked what he thought of it.

"I beg your forgiveness, Your Highness. I think what the borrower says must be true," he replied. "But before I give my judgement, I seek your permission to go and have a bath first."

The king nodded. "You may do so. But be as quick as possible."

• Pelanduk bent his steps to the nearby river for his bath. As he walked along, he came to a clearing where the grass had just been burnt. Throwing himself down, he rolled on the burnt ashes and then made his way back to the king.

King Solomon was bewildered to see Pelanduk covered all over with ashes.

"What is all this?" he asked in astonishment. "Other people become cleaner after a bath. You are just the reverse."

"Your Highness, the river was on fire when I reached there. To prevent the fire from spreading to your palace I jumped inside to extinguish the flames" Pelanduk explained. "That is why my body is all covered with ashes."

The king and his ministers stared incredulously at the Mousedeer. What was he talking about? How could the river be on fire? They had never heard such a fantastic story in all their lives.

"What do you mean by all this? How can you expect me to believe your story?" asked the king.

"I have told you the truth," Pelanduk replied.

The king was angry. The impertinent little fellow! How dare he come and make fun of the great King Solomon?

"I warn you, Mousedeer. This is no place for your

jokes," the king's voice was stern. "Ask any of the people present here whether such a thing can ever happen. It is just impossible."

Dropping on his knees the Mousedeer said, "Your Highness, if you and those who are here do not believe what I am saying, how can you believe what the borrower of the axe has said? The river cannot catch fire, you say. Is it possible that insects can eat up an axe?"

The king became quiet. He saw what Pelanduk meant. Of course, the borrower was lying. There was no need for witnesses in the dispute. The whole thing was as clear as daylight. King Solomon ordered the man who had borrowed the axe to return it to its owner without delay.

Grateful for Pelanduk's help in solving the problem, the king bestowed many favours on the Mousedeer and made him the judge of the forest. From that day onward it was Pelanduk who was the arbitrator in all cases referred to King Solomon.

## *War of the Vegetables*

THERE HAVE been wars on this planet ever since the world began. One hears several stories of wars among people and among animals. This story is a little different in that it is about a war in the vegetable kingdom.

One fine day, standing in a wide green field under a deep blue sky, Jagong the maize plant said, "If rice should cease to exist, I alone would suffice to sustain mankind."

"That is what you think," Dagun the liane retorted with heat, and added after a while, "actually I am the one most essential to mankind."

Gadong the jungle yam began to laugh scornfully. "You two can say what you like. But people cannot do without me."

Thus they argued and the argument went on for the whole day. Seeing that they could not agree, the three

parties brought the case before King Solomon.

The king listened to them with attention. When they had finished, he said: "All three of you are right. But since I have to give judgement in favour of one, I would say that Jagong could sustain mankind better because of his kinship with Kachang the bean."

Dagun the liane and Gadong the yam heard the judgement in silence but in their hearts they swore vengeance against Jagong. "We will show him," they resolved.

Leaving King Solomon's court they went off together to hunt for a fruit spike of the jungle fig-free to impale Jagong with. The latter, hearing news of their quest, promptly set out in search of arrow poison.

Jagong was the first to find what he wanted. Returning with speed he charged from the back and poisoned Gadong (wherefore to this day the jungle yam has narcotic properties). The infuriated Gadong speared Jagong in turn (that is why to this day the cobs of maize are perforated). Hitting back, Jagong reached out his hand, seized the pointed shoot of a 'wilang' stem, and wounded Dagun with it.

At this stage the three of them went before Prophet Elias, imploring him to settle their quarrel. The prophet said, "This matter is too great for me. Take it before Solomon."

So they went to King Solomon again. But the king saw how their eyes flashed with anger and how obstinately they stuck to their respective opinions. He shook his head.

"Go and fight it out among yourselves and appease the rage of your hearts," he said.

Now the parties withdrew to wage a battle for twice seven days. When the fight began, Mata Lembu the 'ox eye' tree came close to watch the combat. Standing in the fury of the battle its skin was grazed by bullets (hence to this day its skin shows the scars). But the 'Perachak' shrub was so scared of the battle that it stood upon tiptoe (wherefore it still grows long and lanky). Andram the sedge was terrified and ran to a place far off to shut out the whole thing. Hearing the noise of battle even from a distance Andram plunged into the river (wherefore to this day it grows over the surface of water).

When the period of twice seven days was over, King Solomon arrived on the battlefield to restore peace. Finding that the battle was still undecided and the parties as adamant as before, the king parted the combatants and set a space between them. Then he made Gadong the yam sit down and Dagun the liane lie down. Going over to the other side he made Jagong the maize plant and Kachang the bean stand together.

## *Lights in the Night*

WHEN MALACCA was a small village, consisting of just a few huts by the side of a river, it attracted little notice. But as it prospered and grew bigger and more important it invited the envy of many a neighbouring kingdom.

Under Sultan Muzaffar Shah, Malacca was a rich and flourishing kingdom. Its trade extended beyond its borders and merchant ships coming from distant countries were often to be seen cruising in Malayan waters. Jealous of its growing wealth and importance the Siamese decided to invade it.

They launched their attack by sea, because by land Malacca was protected by the jungle that was thick and presented too many hazards for a marching army. The Siamese army took the way down the coast on the eastern side of the peninsula, round the tip where the city of Singapore had once stood, and up the western



coast to Malacca. As it advanced, the faster merchant ships coming to Malacca from other countries saw them and warned Malacca of the approaching danger.

The timely warning gave Malacca enough time to prepare its defences. Sultan Muzaffar Shah immediately called all his war chiefs to arrange their forces to defend Malacca. When the Siamese arrived, they were confronted by this great army and engaged in a fierce battle. The invaders were beaten back and made to flee in haste. In fact they were in such a hurry to get back that they threw all their baggage overboard!

After some time the Siamese launched another attack. Again they were beaten back in the same way. After a few attacks had thus been made and repulsed, the Siamese paused to think over their strategy.

"We must launch a surprise attack," they decided. Accordingly, when they next tried to attack, they moved up secretly in the dark. This succeeded so well that the people of Malacca did not know they were coming until the invading fleet had gone past Singapore Island.

Hearing the news the king of Malacca was in great agitation. He had no time to call all his war chiefs. So he called only two—the Bendahara (chief minister) and Sri Bija 'diraja (chief of the war chiefs)—and put them in charge of the operations.

These two men collected everyone they could find into boats. Then the Sri Bija 'diraja called his young son who was brave and daring and said to him, "You go before us and try to find out what you can about the Siamese positions and numbers. We will follow as soon

as we have collected a large number of boats and men."

The young fellow nodded enthusiastically, his eyes gleaming with the light of adventure. Getting into his small boat he rowed right into the Siamese positions, weaving his way in and out of their large fleet. Before the invaders could even realise what was happening, he was already on his way back. When he reached Malacca he was able to tell his father the exact number of the Siamese ships and their positions.

It was now the Bendahara who thought of the next step.

"We must avoid a direct battle with them. They are far too many for us," he said.

"But how can we avoid a direct battle?" asked the chief of the war chiefs.

"Follow me," the Bendahara replied quietly. He stepped into his boat and rowed on. By nightfall they had reached Batu Pahat, and here he ordered his men ashore. He led them down the coast, instructing them to tie firebrands to all the mangrove trees which grew along the shore.

It was a splendid sight! As the Siamese fleet came nearer they wondered what the blaze of lights could mean. Suddenly one of them shouted, "Stop. Those must be the lights from the ships they have collected to defend Malacca."

The lights cast big shining reflections in the water and the whole spectacle looked like a mighty array. The leader of the Siamese fleet gazed thoughtfully towards the coastline.

"They have too many ships. Our small fleet will be no match for them. We shall be defeated."

So he gave orders for retreat. When morning came the men of Malacca could see the last of the Siamese ships disappearing into the distant horizon. The invaders never knew that they had been beaten by a trick.

## *A Long Wait*

SULTAN MAHMUD SHAH of Malacca was an ease-loving monarch who liked to spend his time on picnics and parties in the jungle. And whenever he planned such trips he always wanted his favourites to come with him.

Among his favourites was a man called the Sriwa Raja, which means Master of the King's Elephants. This man was a great favourite of the king. Without him no party was complete. In fact he was so sure of the royal favour that he often kept the king waiting for him—something that no one else in the kingdom would have dared to do.

The Sriwa Raja lived in a nice house up the river. The house was built in Malay style, on stilts, overlooking the river. It had a large verandah running round it. Here the Sriwa Raja would spend long hours, enjoying the lovely view of the river.

Whenever the Sultan thought of going for a picnic, he would set off from his palace in a barge and go up the river, stopping at the Sriwa Raja's house to call for him.

Now the Sriwa Raja was a man of leisurely habits. He was lazy and vain, too. He did not really care to accompany the king on his excursions, but then—how could he say no to his sovereign? So when he would see the royal barge coming up, he would go into his house and have a nap.

Reaching his house, the royal barge would tie up at the landing and the Sultan would send his personal messenger in. The latter had to have permission to enter the house. When he did finally come in and deliver the king's message, the Sriwa Raja would pretend to wake up from his sleep, yawn and stretch his arms, saying "I am thankful to His Majesty for the kind invitation. But you must give me time to get ready. I shall join the Sultan's party as soon as I can."

After the messenger's departure he would take his bath as slowly as he could. After that he would start to have a meal. After the meal he would put on his sarong, undoing it several times until he got it exactly to his liking.

Then would come the jacket and the headcloth. With these he would repeat the same process as with the sarong, until they too were exactly to his liking. Finally he would wear his scarf, and to adjust it he would take it off at least fifteen times before he felt satisfied.

When there was nothing more to do, he would go to the door of the house, but just before stepping out he

would turn back to find his wife. "Am I looking all right?" he'd ask.

Heaven forbid if she should shake her head or point out some defect! For then he would rush back into his room and restart the whole process of dressing up right from the start!

By the time he managed to join the Sultan, the fun had gone out of the party. Everyone would look at him with silent irritation. Often the Sultan himself, tired of waiting, would decide to cancel the party and go home.

When this continued to happen again and again, the Sultan decided that it was time to deal firmly with the Sriwa Raja. So he called Tun Isak, a young man of the court and said to him, "Tomorrow we are going for a picnic. I do not want the Sriwa Raja to spoil it. Will you go ahead of us and get him to be ready in time?"

The young man nodded.

"Tomorrow he shall not be late."

Early next morning Tun Isak knocked at the Sriwa Raja's door. He did not ask for permission to enter the house. He simply came on to the verandah and asked for a mat so that he could wait in comfort.

A while later he shouted in a loud voice so that the Sriwa Raja would hear every word. "Bring me some rice to eat. I am hungry."

The servants could not refuse to bring him rice, for it is the custom of the Malays to be hospitable.

After having a large meal Tun Isak shouted for something to drink.

Now the Sriwa Raja, who as usual was pretending to be fast asleep, heard all the noise that was going on.

"That Tun Isak!" he muttered angrily to himself, "he makes a nuisance of himself wherever he goes. There is no end to the things he wants."

He got up hurriedly from his bed, put on his sarong, jacket and headcloth and came out on to the verandah. His wife and servants stared at him in wonder—they had never known him to be so quick in all his life! Nor did he stop at the door this time to ask his wife how he looked. He just picked up his kris and said quietly, "Tun Isak, let's go."

When they arrived at the palace it was the Sultan's turn to be surprised. He looked at the Sriwa Raja in amazement.

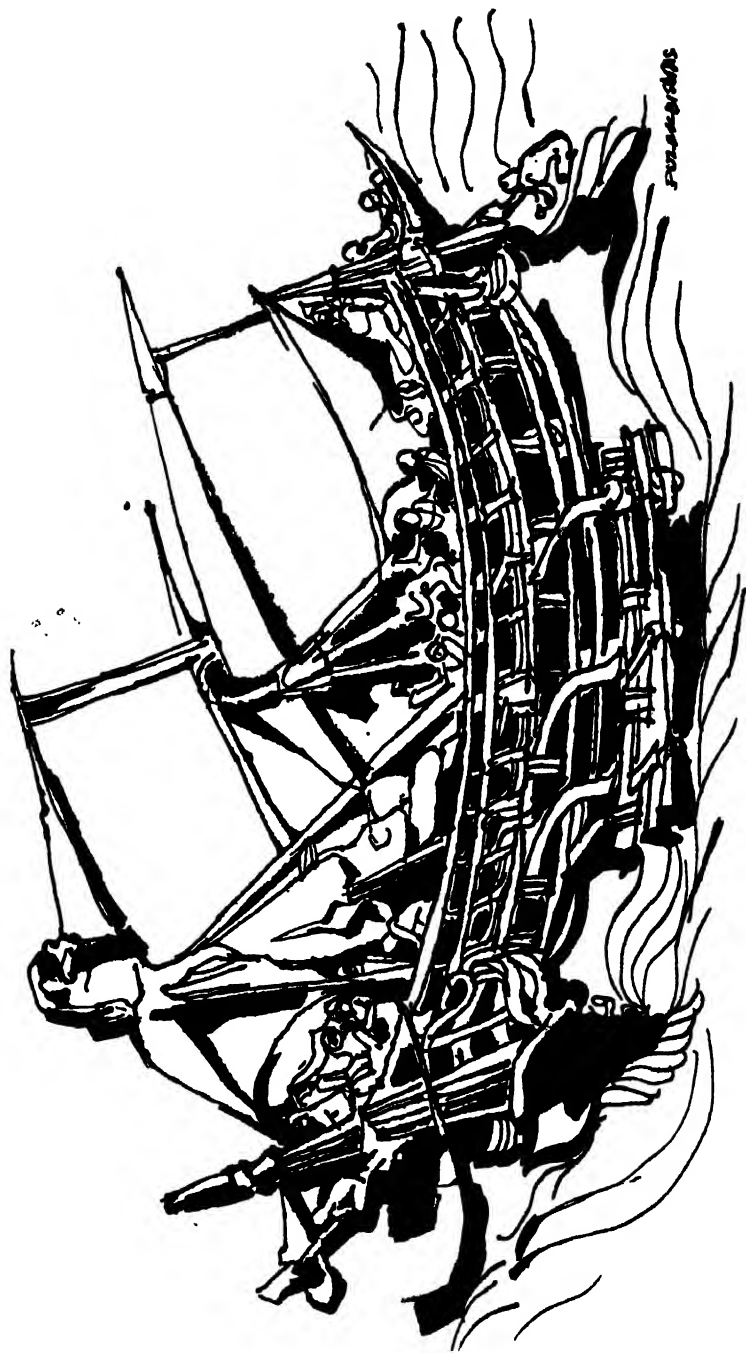
"What! You are here already?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

The Sriwa Raja felt too confused to reply. This time it was his turn to wait for others. For the sun was just beginning to rise in the eastern sky and the party was not yet ready to leave for their picnic.





*Indonesia*



### *Kantchil's Exploits*

Kantchil, the tiny Mousedeer, is the hero of the Indonesian forest. He can face dangers and accomplish deeds too great for other animals. His wit is proverbial to the extent that even men, when confronted with an impossible situation, draw a leaf from Kantchil's book and use their wits to find a way out.

## *Kantchil Falls into a Lime Pit*

ONE DAY Kantchil the Mousedeer happened to pass by a farmer's house which had its front door ajar. The air was cool and both the farmer and his wife were out working in the rice fields. Kantchil could not resist peeping in. Ah! What he saw delighted his eyes. There was a big banana cake freshly made, wrapped in banana leaves. A faint delicious aroma filled the air and titillated his nose. Softly Kantchil tiptoed inside and took a bite. The taste was even more delicious. He took another bite, and then another. Finally he picked up the cake and came out, walking as he ate. He opened the leaves wider and wider to eat better and so absorbed was he in the cake that before he knew where he was going, he fell headlong into the farmer's lime pit.

"Oh, oh," he cried, kicking wildly with his feet and landing right at the bottom. With his usual agility he

tried to jump out but the pit was too deep for his size. After making a few futile attempts he gave up and sat down to think.

Before long Matjan the tiger looked over the edge of the pit. Kantchil, holding the empty banana leaf before his eyes, stared intently at it.

"Tuhan, Tuhan!" he said.

"Why do you take the name of God?" asked the tiger.

Kantchil seemed not to hear. He continued to look at the banana leaf and moved his eyes from side to side as though he were reading.

"Today is doomsday. Those who take refuge in the holy cave shall alone survive. Tuhan, Tuhan!"

"Who says today is doomsday?"

Kantchil looked up. "Can you not see that I am reading from the holy book?" he asked with irritation. "Why do you interrupt me?" And he went on, "On this day, which is today, the world shall come to an end. Only those who seek refuge in the sacred lime pit shall survive!"

The tiger trembled. "May I come into the pit with you?"

"You can't. You are not clean," Kantchil replied.

"I am clean."

"No, you are always sneezing. It is disrespectful to sneeze in a holy place."

"I promise I will not sneeze."

Kantchil read from his banana leaf: "He who pollutes a holy place by sneezing must be thrown out."

"I will not sneeze, I am coming down," the tiger said and came down.

## *KANTCHIL FALLS INTO A LIME PIT*

"Do not disturb me," said Kantchil and went on, "Tuhan, Tuhan! Save us from disaster."

Babi the boar looked over the edge of the pit. "Who says the name of Tuhan down there?" he asked.

"It is doomsday today," the tiger answered. "Kantchil reads it in the holy book. Only those who stay in the sacred lime pit will not be destroyed."

Babi was frightened. "I am coming down to join you."

"No, you can't," said Kantchil. "You are always sneezing. It is written in the holy book that he who contaminates the holy place by sneezing must be thrown out."

"I swear I will not sneeze," the boar said and came down. Kantchil continued to pray, keeping his eyes on the banana leaf. "Save us this day, Tuhan, Tuhan!"

"Who says the name of Tuhan down there?"

Looking up, the tiger and the boar found Gadja the elephant peering down the edge.

"Be quiet," they said; "today is doomsday. Kantchil reads it in the holy book."

"But why are you all hiding?"

"Because it is written that those who find refuge in the sacred lime pit will alone escape destruction."

Gadja's trunk shook in panic. "I am coming down too."

"Oh no, no," the three inside shouted vehemently. "You are not clean. You sneeze too much and too loud. It is written in the holy book that the one who pollutes the holy place by sneezing must be thrown out."

"Please let me come down," Gadja pleaded. "I am

not going to sneeze. I shall stand on my trunk so that I will not sneeze."

Gadja was permitted to come down and all four sat huddled together while Kantchil held the leaf before his eyes, reciting the while: "Tuhan, Tuhan!"

Suddenly he stopped, and clutched at his nose.

"May it not be!" he said. "May it not b-e-e. A-tchee!"

"He has defiled the place," the other animals cried in anger, and seizing him together, they threw him out of the lime pit.

## *Minangkabau*

SIX HUNDRED years ago a great Javanese king named Sanagara started out to conquer all of the islands of the Indies. Wherever he went, his mighty armies swept like a tornado over the land. Last of all he came to Sumatra and conquered most of it. Only a small western part of the island remained to be subjugated.

To this part Raja Sanagara brought his army and sent a messenger to the people asking them to surrender. Panic spread among the villages and their men met to decide what they should do. They knew that before the organised forces of Raja Sanagara they hadn't a chance.

"Fighting can only end in disaster," said one elder among them. "Many men will die, our villages will be destroyed, and our families will be broken. In the event of defeat, those of us who survive will be reduced to slavery."

Many angry voices were raised against this argument. "How can you talk like this? We cannot be cowards and give in without a fight," they said.

Thus they talked at length, arguing back and forth, unable to decide what course to take. At last one of them made a suggestion which appealed to all.

"We are not strong enough to resist the enemy with our weapons. Let us put it to the king that instead of men fighting on each side, let the issue be decided by a fight between two buffaloes."

Accordingly a committee of elders was formed and they went to see the king.

"Your Majesty," they said, "if there is a fight, many people will die on both sides and our families will suffer. Therefore we have come to suggest that let us each bring a powerful karbau to the battlefield to fight. If your karbau wins, we will become your subjects. If our karbau wins, you will take your armies away and leave us free."

Raja Sanagara listened attentively. He liked the idea. "Surely," he thought, "it'd be better for a buffalo to die than for men to die." He agreed.

The king sent his messengers to find the largest karbau in his dominions. There were many rich islands under Raja Sanagara's rule and his messengers travelled to the farthest corners to search for a karbau among the wealthiest cattle owners. Finally they brought back the largest buffalo they could find.

Meanwhile the people of West Sumatra had also searched in every village of their island and found a big, fine buffalo. But when they saw the animal brought by Raja Sanagara's men, they lost heart.



"It's no use," they said despairingly, "our karbau will be no match for the other. Look how big and strong it is."

The elders met again to think. A wise man among them said, "We must be like Kantchil and use our wits. In this situation we have to be clever, not strong."

So they continued to talk and talk till it was midday. The sun turned westward and still they talked. It was evening when they came out of the meeting house. They had made a plan.

They went into their fields and took a karbau bull calf from his mother. They brought it into the village and fastened sharp iron points to his tiny horns. For three days they kept it away from his mother and without food. On the morning of the fourth day, the day appointed for the fight, they led it to the battlefield.

Raja Sanagara's men were also leading their fighting karbau to the field. When they saw the little bull calf walking meekly behind the village men, they began to laugh.

"Is this why we searched in all our islands for a fierce fighting buffalo?" they asked one another, laughing derisively.

The people of West Sumatra waited till the laughter had died down.

"We are ready," they said when it was quiet.

Both sides untied the animals and turned them into the field.

Across the field the big karbau and the little karbau faced each other, without moving. Each seemed to be sizing up the other. Then the calf took a step forward. He was very hungry and from a distance the large

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karbau looked like his mother. He ran towards it, going straight under its belly and nuzzled to find milk. His iron-tipped horns pierced the belly of the karbau who gave a long, wounded cry and dropped down dead.

Raja Sanagara watched silently. He understood what had happened. That very day, he withdrew his army and went away, leaving the people and their country free.

Dancing with joy, the villagers hugged their little calf, put a garland of flowers around his neck and led him back to his mother.

Since that time they have called their country "Minangkabau", which means the victory of the buffalo, and they build the roofs of their houses to look like buffalo horns.

## *Why Borneo Has No Tigers*

**T**HERE ARE no tigers in the jungles of Borneo. People say that this is because of Kantchil's message to the Raja of Tigers who was about to invade Borneo.

The Raja of Tigers lived in Java which was once in the grip of a severe famine. Animals died by the score and the withered forest wore a bare, dismal look. The king called his tiger ministers to consult with them about the serious situation they were facing.

"How long can we go on like this?" said the king. "Day by day it is becoming more difficult to find food. We are growing thin and weak. At this rate we will lose the respect of other animals. How are we to solve this problem?"

The ministers nodded their heads in grave concern. They spoke anxiously. "There is no other way, Your Majesty, but to conquer Borneo and make its inhabi-

tants pay tribute to us. Otherwise we shall perish."

This idea had occurred to the king. He was now glad to find that his ministers agreed with him. He said, "Yes, we must send them an ultimatum."

The ruler selected three of his most trusted ministers to be his messengers to Borneo.

"Go and seek the Raja of Borneo. Tell him that you come from the mighty Raja of Tigers who commands him to send us large quantities of food and gold. If he refuses, I shall send an army against him to conquer Borneo. And to convince him of our strength, show him this." The Raja of Tigers plucked out the longest and heaviest of his whiskers and gave it to his ministers.

The messengers embarked on their mission and crossed the wide Java Sea after many days of uncertain weather. At last they reached the island of Borneo where they landed and made their way to the forest.

"Where shall we find the Raja of Borneo?" they asked when they reached the outskirts of the forest. But the forest dwellers, seeing strangers of ferocious mien, shied away and hid themselves in the shadows. The tiger ministers trudged along the narrow trails of the great jungle, glancing in every direction for some sign of life but there was none. Not a sound disturbed the solemn stillness of the vast jungle. Weary with fatigue, they came to a small clearing in the forest. There, standing before them, was Kantchil the Mouse-deer.

Ordinarily they would have ignored so small a creature. Before them, so big and fierce, he looked a little nothing. But in their present predicament they had no choice.

"You Insignificant Thing," they called, with proper contempt in their voice, "where is your king? We have come from the powerful Raja of Tigers of Java to demand his surrender."

"What!" said Kantchil, momentarily taken aback. Then he hastened to add, "Our king is hunting in the forest."

"Take us to him," the tigers said, "we bring a message for him from our invincible ruler."

Kantchil thought. "How shall I put them off?" He wanted time to collect his thoughts. "Great Ones, if you will entrust me with your message, I shall carry it for you. Meanwhile you may rest your weary selves here."

"Very well," the messengers said. "Say to your king that our magnificent Raja demands gold and food. If your king refuses, our ruler will invade your land with a mighty army of tigers. When you have said all this, show him this whisker plucked by our ruler from his noble face so that you may all know how powerful he is."

Kantchil extended both his hands to receive the royal whisker with due deference. Then he turned and disappeared into the shadows of the forest.

There he sat long and thought hard. "What is to happen to us now?" he asked himself. "When tigers say food they mean meat. Everyone of us is meat. If the messengers go back without any reply, the Raja of Tigers will invade us with his army and they will remain in Borneo forever."

Thus reflecting, Kantchil got up and went to Landak the porcupine to whom he explained the whole problem.

"My friend, we must give some reply to these messengers and hope for the best. Please give me one of your quills."

The porcupine pulled out a quill from his back and gave it to Kantchil. The Mousedeer now hastened to the clearing where the tigers waited.

"Great Messengers from Java, I was able to see our majestic ruler. When I was admitted to his presence, he had just returned from his hunt. His Eminence was resting while his servants were grinding his claws between two mountains to sharpen them. When I delivered your message to our sovereign his eyes became red with anger as he listened. He got up and paced up and down. Then he said, "Tell these insolent nothings from Java that I accept the challenge. I am tired of the long peaceful quiet that has descended over Borneo since my father conquered it. My soldiers are hungry for battle. Tell the Raja of Tigers that we do not pay tribute, we exact it."

The tiger ministers looked at each other, amazed beyond words. But Kantchil had not finished.

"After our king had spoken, he took a whisker from his face and said: 'Give this to them. This is my reply.'"

The quill which Kantchil held out was twenty times the thickness of the whisker sent by the Raja of Tigers. The tiger ministers beheld it with fear.

Taking the quill the messengers returned to Java with all possible speed. Standing before their king they spoke in a subdued voice.

"Noble One, we delivered your ultimatum to the king of Borneo. That miserable ruler says that he chooses war and has sent this whisker from his face."

They handed him the thick long quill from the porcupine's back. The Raja of Tigers took it and looked at it thoughtfully. Then his eyes wandered away in the distance.

"I have decided since you left, that instead of going to Borneo it would be better for us to levy a tax upon the elephants of Sumatra."

Whether the Raja of Tigers took his army to Sumatra or not is lost in history. But it is certain that he did not invade Borneo, for there are no tigers anywhere in the jungles of Borneo.

## *The Great Census*

ONE FINE day Buwaya the crocodile was crawling slowly along the bank of a river in search of game. Suddenly a big heavy tree growing close to the riverbank fell right over the crocodile's back, pinning him to the spot. Buwaya screamed for help.

Sitting in the cool shade of a tree nearby was Karbau the buffalo. Hearing the crocodile's cries, he rose and sauntered down to the river to investigate.

"What is all this noise about?"

"I am caught under this tree," Buwaya replied in a plaintive voice. "Please lift it from my back; otherwise I shall die."

The buffalo put his horns under the tree and raised it.

"Thank you, dear friend," said the crocodile; "but I feel so weak, I can't move. Can you push me into the water?"



The buffalo stepped into the river and pushed.

"Oh, oh, I am aching in every limb. Please push me just a little more," the crocodile said. And the unsuspecting buffalo walked further and further till he was standing leg deep in the water. Then, without warning, the reptile swished round and caught the buffalo's leg between his teeth.

"What are you doing?" asked the buffalo in bewilderment.

"I am hungry," the crocodile replied coolly. "I must eat."

Karbau kicked and protested loudly. "Is this the way you repay me for my help? I have just saved you and you want to eat me?" But the crocodile was deaf to all reason.

The noise attracted the attention of Kantchil the Mousedeer who had at that moment come down to the river for a drink. He approached them.

"What are you two arguing about?"

"Look at this treacherous crocodile," said the buffalo. "I saved him from under a tree and in return he is going to eat me."

"I was hungry and going in search of food. The tree fell over me and interrupted me," the crocodile explained.

"All this sounds very complicated," Kantchil said. "In my opinion it is a matter for legal judgement."

"Who is to be the judge?" Buwaya asked.

"If you both agree, I will be the judge," said Kantchil.

Buwaya and Karbau nodded their heads in assent.

"Now let me see the situation exactly as it was. Buwaya,

you take your position under the tree. Karbau, come out on dry ground as you were."

The crocodile released the buffalo's leg and swam to the river's edge by the fallen tree. The buffalo came out of the water.

"This is not enough," Kantchil continued. "The crocodile must get under the tree as he was so that I can see what actually happened."

Bending his head the buffalo raised the tree on his horns and placed it on the crocodile's back.

"Is this the way it was?" Kantchil asked.

"Yes," the crocodile and the buffalo both replied.

"Then it is all very simple," the judge pronounced in a solemn voice; "Karbau saved your life. You are an ungrateful creature and the buffalo was foolish to help you. He can help you again if he likes."

"I will do no such thing," said the buffalo, walking away. "I have learnt my lesson."

The crocodile thrashed about in a rage. "You treacherous Kantchil. Wait till I get my hands upon you. In the name of all crocodiles I declare war on you."

Kantchil laughed and skipped away, leaving the crocodile fuming and fastened under the tree.

Time passed. One day Kantchil happened to come that way again. A soft breeze was blowing from the river and the smell of sweet fruit was wafted to him from the other side of the river.

"Oh, I wish I could eat that fruit," the Mousedeer thought. He went down to the riverbank and stepped into the shallows among the rushes.

All of a sudden, the voice of a crocodile called, "Look out. War upon Kantchil!"

Before the crocodile could seize Kantchil, the latter sprang out of the shallows, shaken by the sudden attack.

"What a narrow escape," he muttered under his breath. "I will have to watch my step."

He came to another crossing place where he paused and looked at the big black log lying motionless in the water. "That might be another crocodile," he said to himself.

Aloud he asked: "Are you a crocodile?"

There was no answer.

"You look like a log."

Still no reply.

"Don't be clever. If you are a crocodile you will float downstream; if a log, you will float upstream."

The log began to move upstream.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Kantchil. "Whoever heard of a log floating upstream?" And he raced along the riverbank until he came to another crossing place. Again he looked closely at the water. To be sure, a black crocodile nose poked out of the river's smooth surface here and there. "What am I to do? I must think of another strategy," he told himself.

He pondered deeply and then called in a commanding voice.

"God has ordained that all creatures of the forest must be counted. Therefore, you crocodiles, arise from the water for the great census."

Crocodiles everywhere in the river began to rise to the surface.

"Stand in a row for counting so that none is left out."

Soon the whole river swarmed with the crocodile

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race ranged in a row that looked like a bridge spanning the river.

"One, in the name of God," said Kantchil leaping on to the back of the first crocodile.

"Two, three, four, five," he counted as he jumped over them one by one.

"Nine, ten, eleven, in the name of God!"

"I declare the census closed," he cried as he reached the riverbank and disappeared into the forest to eat his fruit.

## *Invitation to the Feast*

L O N G L O N G ago, on the bank of the River Malong there lived a man named Pamudjo. One day he heard that their rich neighbour Keromo who owned a grand big house up the river was giving a feast to which all the people of the countryside were invited. Pamudjo went home in great excitement.

"It's a long time since I tasted anything to satisfy my hunger," he said to his wife. "You give me nothing but rice to eat. Today I am going to Keromo's feast. You can go and visit your mother."

"This is a fine way of thanking me for all the trouble I take for you," replied the wife. She immediately put on her holiday clothes and left.

Pamudjo dressed himself in his finest sarong and got into his boat. As he rowed upstream he saw many other boats with people in gay attire, singing and waving at each other. Pamudjo joined in the general gaiety.

But when he was nearing Keromo's house, he noticed a number of boats paddling downstream. And he wondered why.

"Where are you going?" he enquired of a man he knew.

"Don't you know that Machmud is giving a feast to which we are all invited?" the man replied.

Pamudjo was silent. He thought: "Machmud is a generous man, far more generous than Keromo. It is a pity he is giving a feast on the same day as Keromo. Why should I not go to Machmud's?"

So he turned his boat and rowed downstream. On the way he passed his little house. With regular strokes he continued to paddle, but when he was almost within reach of Machmud's house, he saw some boats bound upstream. The men were in high spirits and talking loudly.

"Wonderful fellow, our Keromo! He is serving a whole cow and a calf today."

"Yes, yes. I shall eat to my heart's fill."

A cloud passed over Pamudjo's face. "Why am I going to Machmud's feast? When has he given anything more than a skinny cow?"

And he turned his boat and paddled upstream towards Keromo's. The sun had risen high in the sky. It had grown hot and his brow perspired. He passed his little house on the bank. Suddenly someone called out to him.

"Pamudjo, where are you going?"

Pamudjo looked and recognised his friend Awang.

"I am going to Keromo's feast."

"Why to Keromo? Machmud is giving a feast and money gifts."

Yes, of course, Machmud was a generous fellow. He had always said so. Why was he going to Keromo's? He turned his boat swiftly around and raced towards Machmud's house. Reaching the beach he jumped out of his boat and ran. A villager stopped him.

"Where are you running? The feast is over."

"Over?" Pamudjo exclaimed. "What about the money gifts?"

"Everything is finished, the feast and the money gifts."

Poor Pamudjo! He could have cried with vexation. Running back to his boat, he caught hold of the oars and paddled vigorously upstream. He had to reach Keromo's house without delay. His stomach ached with hunger.

When he reached the beach, he found streams of people on their way back. A large number of them stood in small groups, talking leisurely.

"Have you come for Keromo's feast?" Pamudjo asked. He was out of breath and his voice choked.

"You are too late. The feast is over," they replied.

With slow, dragging steps Pamudjo walked back to his boat, and made for his home. He felt weak and his throat was parched.

Inside his house he shouted for his wife. "Oh, that woman! She is never at home. Always rushing off to her mother's!" he complained.

He found a piece of dried fish. With it he took a bottle of wine and carried his meagre meal to the boat. He set the bottle down on the boat's edge, and reclining, started to eat. As he did so, the boat tilted and the bottle of wine fell into the water. Pamudjo left his fish

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and jumped into the river to retrieve it. When he came out, holding an empty bottle, he saw a dog eating the last bit of fish.

Tears ran down his cheeks. Numerous boats were going up and down the river, carrying people who were singing and laughing. Two feasts, and Pamudjo had got nothing to eat.

The people of Java have a saying to describe Pamudjo's plight. They say: "That is the way it is with people who cannot decide."



## *The Island of Celebes*

ORIGINALLY THE island of Celebes was called by another name. A few hundred years ago a ship carrying Portuguese explorers sighted this island and came ashore to enquire where they were.

Near the beach a blacksmith sat working at his forge, and the newcomers asked him, "What is the name of this island?"

The blacksmith had never heard Portuguese before. He thought they wanted to know what he was making.

"Sele basi," he replied, which means an iron kris, or knife.

The sailors thanked him and went away. Back in their country when they drew the map of their voyage, they put down the name of the island as Celebes.

Since then the island has always been called Celebes.

A story is told about the people of this island that they eat many kinds of fish from the sea, but never the

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dolphin. The fishermen of the villages row far out to sea for their catch, but even when they see a whole lot of dolphins diving in the waters they do not cast their nets over them. This is because the people believe that dolphins are not really fishes but human beings who were abandoned in the sea by the king of the South Islands.

It happened a long, long time ago. The Raja of the South Islands had to make a voyage to the North Islands on a matter of state. He gave orders to his men to prepare for the journey and a ship was fitted out with lavish comfort and a large number of attendants to look after the monarch. When the wind was favourable the royal ship set sail.

For days the southerly wind sustained them and carried the party far out on the ocean. Then the wind suddenly stopped and the ship floated on the quiet waters.

The Raja grew restless. Impatiently he paced the decks, waiting for the wind to rise. In his nervousness he fingered the jewelled buckle of the belt that he wore around his waist while his eyes anxiously scanned the calm horizon. Standing on the stern of the ship the Raja leaned over the edge, his hand still on the buckle of his belt. Of a sudden the ornament unclasped and fell into the sea.

The sovereign called his attendants and told them that the buckle must be found.

"Send the slaves in search of it," he ordered.

The slaves jumped overboard and dived into the deep waves of the ocean. They swam and went down again and again in search of the precious ornament,

but they found nothing. After a long, fruitless search, they came out, exhausted and breathless, and held on to the ship's side.

Watching from above the king shouted, "No, you must find my buckle before you come up."

The whole day passed. Then the whole night. When the next morning came the slaves could be seen still swimming and diving in the sea. There was no trace of the ornament.

Thus seven days passed. At last a strong wind rose from the south and filled the ship's sails. The Raja gave orders to his men to resume the voyage.

"What about the slaves, Sire?" they asked.

"Let them continue to search," he replied.

The ship sailed away, leaving the hapless slaves in mid-ocean.

Indonesians say that the buckle has never been found and so the quest goes on to this day. In the course of years, the slaves have changed their form and become dolphins. It is because of this belief that they do not eat the dolphin.

## *The King Who Could Not Sleep*

ONCE UPON a time there was a king who ruled over a large kingdom and lived in great splendour. His palace was surrounded by a beautiful garden which was in bloom all the year round. Just beyond the palace lay a thick forest meant only for royal sport. .

Despite all these luxuries the king was not happy, for he was a sick man. He could not sleep. No one knew the reason why. He would lie awake night after night, tossing restlessly on his bed, trying desperately to sleep but to no avail. His courtiers suggested various remedies, but none worked.

Finally they heard of a physician in a distant village who was reputed to have cured many diseases. The king's men went to him with many presents and the physician gave them medicine in a large silver cup. The king drank it five times during the day as advised

by the physician, but nothing happened. Not a yawn.

Sick of his life, the king left the palace unseen, disguised as a commoner, and made for the forest.

There, among the trees, the air was fresh and cool. The king relaxed in the peaceful quiet of the woods, walking slowly, enjoying the verdant beauty. Suddenly a sharp sound fell on his ears.

“What is that?” he cried.

No answer. He heard only the echo of his own voice. A moment later, the same sharp sound came again.

Annoyed, the king started to walk in that direction.

Along the narrow trail, in the distance, he saw a peasant chopping wood. Stripped to the waist, the woodcutter's body was covered with sweat and glistened in the hot sun's rays. But he was too busy to notice anything. He went on cutting the tree. With regular motions he raised his axe and brought it down with force at the trunk of the tree. When the tree was felled, he started to cut the trunk into small pieces.

The king watched with fascination. The sound no longer annoyed him. He felt sorry for the man who had to work so hard. “Poor fellow. The day is very hot,” he whispered to himself.

After some time the woodcutter kept his axe down, wiped his body with a piece of dirty cloth and stretched himself on the ground. “A-ah,” he yawned, turning on one side, and then gave a start. Who was the stranger staring at him so? He sat bolt upright.

“You must be tired,” the king said kindly, smiling. “It is very hot. Why don't you rest?”

“Sir, you gave me a real fright. Since you are not the supervisor, I thought you were some evil spirit of the

forest wandering around. But after hearing you speak, I can see that you are an ordinary human being like me. You seem to be a person not used to hard work."

The king nodded.

"Yes," the woodcutter continued, "your dress is clean and neat. Your palms are soft, not rough like these," he opened his own hands. "Perhaps you are a tailor?"

"No, I am not a tailor. But I wish to ask you—can you sleep soundly after working hard like this?"

The peasant laughed. What a funny question to ask!

"Sir, I can sleep soundly for hours and hours. Even the bugs can't disturb me."

"I do not believe it," the king said.

"What is it that you do not believe? If I were rich, I would not wake up from my sleep for a week. But I am a poor man and have to work hard for my living. If I do not labour hard, my wife and children will die of hunger."

"Have you not heard that our king has long been suffering from sleeplessness?"

The woodcutter laughed merrily. "Now that is really strange. The king has not to work hard like me to earn his livelihood and all his orders are obeyed. He can sleep on soft mattresses and silk cushions. Why then can't he sleep?"

The king remained silent.

"But I must get back to work. If the supervisor catches me talking like this, he will dismiss me," the woodcutter picked up his axe and resumed his work.

The king continued to watch with keen interest. He wondered how a mere woodcutter could sleep well,

while he, a king, could not sleep at all. After a while he spoke again.

"Listen. Give me your axe. I shall do your work. You go and sleep."

"No Sir," said the poor labourer. "I must complete my work before evening."

"Don't worry. You go and sleep there," the king said, pointing to the shade of a tree nearby. "I want to see if you really can sleep anywhere as you say."

The poor man hesitated, looking doubtful. But the king snatched the axe from his hand and started cutting the tree. Without further protest the woodcutter went and lay down under the shady tree.

In a moment he was fast asleep. After some time, when the king turned round, he found the man in deep sleep, his regular breathing audible in the silence around.

"How the fellow sleeps," he thought, not without envy. "Without a mattress, without a pillow, not even a mat. Really wonderful."

Because he had promised to finish the work, the king went on cutting the tree. He felt tired after some time and his body perspired. So he removed his coat and continued his work.

At last the tree was felled and cut into small pieces. The king dropped the axe with a sigh of relief and looked at his hands. The palms were red and his skin felt sore. His arms and waist ached. He lay down on the ground beside the sleeping man. Gradually, in the cool forest air his eyes drooped and he was fast asleep.

It was evening and the supervisor came round to estimate each labourer's work. When he came upon the

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woodcutter sleeping beside a stranger, he was furious.

"Get up, you lazy, wretched fellow," he shouted, kicking the labourer.

The king stirred and opened his eyes.

"Who are you?" asked the supervisor.

"Why are you making so much noise?" The king got up and stared with sleepy eyes at the intruder. Then his gaze wandered down to the sleeping man. "Let him sleep. He is very tired."

"Who are you to tell me what I should do? I am the supervisor in charge of the forest here," he spoke harshly and his voice was insolent.

The king's eyes flashed with anger. He caught hold of the supervisor's neck.

"You mad man, get away from here. I will break your neck if you wake up this man."

Pale with rage, and swearing under his breath, the supervisor backed away. He was a vain man, and relentless towards his subordinates, but like all bullies, a coward at heart.

"Beware!" he shouted to the king. "I shall return and give you a taste of my punch."

In the meantime the palace was in a complete turmoil over the king's disappearance. Everyone was looking everywhere for the missing monarch. Having searched every nook and corner, the courtiers were entering the forest when a man, waving his arms in a frenzy, emerged from the shadows and ran into them.

"Have you seen the king?" the courtiers asked him.

"I do not know about the king", the supervisor replied, "but if you gentlemen come with me, I will



show you a stranger with tangled hair who thinks he is a king."

The courtiers exchanged glances and accompanied him to the spot where, to their utter amazement, they found their sovereign sitting beside a sleeping peasant.

"There is that stranger," the supervisor pointed scornfully to the king. The next instant his eyes gaped with horror as he saw the men bowing deeply to the stranger with the tangled hair.

"Your Highness, we have been looking for you everywhere," they said.

The king got up and instructed the courtiers to carry the sleeping woodcutter to the palace and lay him down in a quiet room on a bed covered with a soft mattress and silk cushions.

"Let him sleep till he wakes up himself," the king told them. "Then see that you feed him sumptuously, for this man has helped me to find the medicine for my sleeplessness."

That night there was a big feast at the palace to which all people, high and low, rich and poor, were invited. The royal mansion twinkled with a thousand lights and the king laughed and walked as if on air for he felt happy and cured.

The next day the woodcutter was escorted to his home by the royal guards. He received many presents from the king who also promoted him to be the chief supervisor of the royal forest.



*The Philippines*





## *The Legend of the Rainbow*

*I*N THE old old days people worshipped Bathala, the source of all graces. They prayed to him and offered gifts to him to invoke his benediction.

One day Bathala thought of taking a trip to the earth. "The people of the earth have been very good to me," he said to himself; "It is time I visited them in their homes and made them happy."

But before he left the heavens he wanted to see all his children. So he commanded the little spirits to call them.

The daughters came—Tala, the star; Liwayway, the dawn; and Tag-ani, the goddess of harvest. A loud noise and blinding flash proclaimed the arrival of his sons; Kidlat, the lightning; Hangin, the wind; and Araw, the sun.

Bathala embraced them one by one and told them

of his intended visit to the earth. Suddenly he stopped, looking at one empty seat. "Where is Bighani?" he asked.

"I looked for Bighani but she is nowhere to be found," answered a little spirit.

"Perhaps she is among her flowers in some distant land on earth," someone whispered. The others nodded, for they knew that their sister Bighani, the goddess of flowers, loved to play in gardens and coax the plants to bloom.

Bathala was very angry indeed. "If Bighani prefers to be with her flowers, she can stay with them forever," he said.

There was complete silence around. "From now on," Bathala continued, "she will remain wherever she is at the moment and live there alone."

Bathala's children glanced apprehensively at one another. When their father was in his present mood, none dared raise a voice against his orders.

At that very minute Bighani was in a far-away garden, flitting gaily from flower to flower. As evening approached, she turned her steps homeward. To her dismay she found she could not find her way out. Every path she took brought her back to the same spot. She was still wondering what had happened when a spirit came to tell her of Bathala's anger.

"But..." Bighani tried to speak but couldn't. Tears glistened in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. Then she began to sob. "I am not sorry to lose my place in Bathala's kingdom. I grieve because I have offended my father." She stood forlornly, looking after the little spirit who turned to go away.

## THE LEGEND OF THE RAINBOW

Bighani stayed on in the flower garden which became her home. The people living in the neighbourhood noticed that the garden grew lovelier and more colourful each day. The flowers were in perpetual bloom and filled the air with a soft fragrance.

They often came to visit the garden. As days passed they grew fond of Bighani and wanted to show in some way their appreciation of her.

• “Let us build a bower in her garden,” someone suggested. Everyone agreed that that was a wonderful idea.

So they built a bower and covered it with flowers. Its high big arch curved gracefully over the garden's entrance and could be seen from a long distance.

Up in the heavens Bathala missed his fair daughter who used to deck his room with sweet scented blossoms. He missed her so much that he sent a messenger to bring her back.

Bighani cried with happiness when her father's messenger arrived for her. But she was also sad to leave her friends who had been so good to her. As a token of their love she took the lovely bower with her to Bathala's kingdom.

Since then, whenever the goddess of flowers goes on a journey to earthly gardens, the people see the wondrous many-coloured arch in the sky. “Look!” they say, pointing to the rainbow, “that is Bighani coming with her bower to visit our gardens.”

## *The Mystery of the High Tide*

**T**HERE WAS a time when only gods lived in this world. The earth, the sea and the sky formed separate kingdoms, ruled by three powerful gods, each supreme in his own domain.

The sky was ruled by the sun god who had a lovely daughter named Luna, the Moon. Luna had a passion for riding. Among her many possessions she had a golden chariot in which she roamed the heavens at will.

One day she happened to ride far out in the sky, taking a path she had not seen before. It led her outside her father's kingdom. Curious to know where it ended, she continued to follow it until she reached the place where the sky met the sea.

Lost in wonder Luna gazed with enchanted eyes at the beauty of the vast, endless sea and listened to the gurgling sounds that were so strange to her ears. Suddenly a voice startled her.



"Where hast thou come from, most beautiful one?"

Turning round Luna found a young handsome man standing close behind her. She was about to walk away when the man smiled. Involuntarily she smiled too, and replied, "I am Luna, daughter of the sun god."

"I am Mar, son of the sea god. Welcome to our kingdom," the young man smiled again and bowed.

Soon they were like friends, talking and telling each other interesting stories. When it was time for Luna to return, Mar made her promise that she would come again to meet him. She promised and came to the same spot a few days later, and after that she came everyday for both had fallen deeply in love with each other.

One day Luna returned home from her secret meeting with Mar, full of joy. She seemed to be walking on air. Luna's cousin who had come to visit her noticed this and remarked, "What is the matter? You look so happy, Luna."

Luna blushed and blurted out her secret. "Please don't tell my father about it," she begged her cousin.

Jealous of Luna's beauty and her new found happiness, the cousin took the first opportunity to reveal Luna's secret to the sun god. The sun god's anger was great. He was furious that his own daughter had disobeyed the Immortal Laws. He called her.

"What is this I hear about your secret meetings?"

Luna became pale and looked down.

"So it is correct," said her father and he ordered that henceforth she was to remain isolated, under guard, in the heavenly garden. At the same time he sent a messenger to the sea god informing him of his son's disobedience to the Immortal Laws.

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The sea god called Mar before him. "Is it correct that you have been secretly meeting the daughter of the sun god?"

Mar remained silent.

"Do you not know that that is against the Immortal Laws?" the sea god shouted and he imprisoned his son in one of the sea caves.

Thus separated, Luna and Mar shed bitter tears and pined for each other.

One day, while strolling in the garden, Luna found that there was no one guarding the garden gate. She stole out, got into her golden chariot and rode with breathless speed to the sea kingdom. She came to the spot where Mar used to be waiting for her. But today, alas, he was not there.

"Mar! Mar!" she whispered his name to the winds.

Sitting desolately in the sea cave, Mar started as he saw Luna's reflection in the water. He rushed forward and tried to get out of the cave, but could not. He struggled so hard that he shook the walls of the cave, causing unrest in the sea.

Luna waited for Mar to appear, but he did not come. Sadly she turned her steps homeward.

After that, each time she remembered Mar, she would rush out in her golden chariot and come to their meeting place. Seeing her reflection Mar would struggle desperately to get out, but without success.

And so it goes on to this day. When fishermen at sea see the high tide during full moon, they say: "It is Mar struggling to escape from his cave to meet Luna."

## *The Legend of Lacaylacay*

**A**LONG THE northeastern coast of Cagayan, about three kilometers from the town of Claveria, there stand two rocks that look like a man and a woman. They are called Lacaylacay and Backetbaket. In the local language of the place Lacaylacay means 'old man', while Backetbaket means 'old woman'. Some distance east of these rocks stands another small rock called Ubing-ubing, which means 'child'.

It is said that Lacaylacay has power over the surrounding sea and the winds that blow over it. He can make the sea calm or rough, prevent the growth of seaweeds on the rocks or make the fish disappear. For this reason he is greatly feared by fishermen and sailors.

People say that once upon a time Lacaylacay, Backetbaket and Ubing-ubing formed a happy family of father, mother and son. They lived near the sea, for Lacaylacay was a fisherman. Every morning he went

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out to sea to catch fish. When he returned with a good catch, his wife would offer some to the gods before the family partook of it. As days passed, the fisherman prospered. With more riches he and his wife became proud and arrogant.

One day Lacaylacay had a fine catch. It was just morning when he was returning home with his basket full of fish. On the way he met an old man, bent with age. The latter extended his right hand and said in a feeble voice, "Please give me some fish. I am very hungry."

"I have nothing to give you," replied the fisherman and walked on.

That afternoon his wife was pounding rice when a beggar came to their door.

"Please give me something. I have nothing to eat," he begged.

"Go away from here, you lazy man," Backetbucket replied in an angry tone. "Why don't you work? Only lazy people beg."

Early next morning the fisherman went out to fish as usual. His wife got up a little later and went into the kitchen to cook breakfast. Her husband would be home soon. She hoped he would have as good a catch as he had had the day before.

The cooking was done and she waited for the fisherman's return. After a while she started putting the house in order. That work was finished too; still the husband hadn't returned. She went outside and looked down the road. No sign of him. Worried, she came inside, wrapped her husband's food, and calling her son, hurried with him towards the seashore.

## *THE LEGEND OF LACAYLACAY*

They searched the seashore and scanned the sea, but there was no trace of the fisherman. They called out to him but their voice was lost in the whistling wind.

Noon came. Still he didn't come. The mother and son were sick with a nameless fear. What could have happened?

As they sat on the seashore looking out into the sea, a strange thing happened. In the distance, there slowly arose from the waters a rock bearing a distinct resemblance to a man. As they stared, the woman noticed that it looked very much like her husband, Lacaylacay. She got up with a cry.

"Come my son. We must go there."

Seeing a raft nearby she asked her son to row her out to the sea.

When they reached the stone figure, they found close to it the fisherman's raft with a fishing net and a fish basket on it. Mother and son wept bitterly. Then the woman leaped into the sea and clung to the rock. The gods, hearing her sobs, changed her to a rock also.

Left alone on the raft, the boy sobbed for his parents. A strong wind carried the raft away. As it drifted, a powerful wave swept over it and Ubing-ubing was drowned. Seeing all, the gods changed the boy to a rock, and out of compassion for the family, endowed the fisherman with power over the sea and the winds in that place.

It is said that during the Spanish regime, a vessel sailed near the rocks. The sailors were alarmed to see the strange-looking figures but the captain of the ship laughed at their fears and ordered a cannon to be fired at Lacaylacay.

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The bullet struck the brim of Lacaylacay's hat. Immediately a storm arose. The waves leaped higher and higher, dashing fiercely against the vessel and broke it into a thousand pieces. The captain and many of the sailors were drowned. Only a few survived to tell the sad story.

From that time fishermen and sailors who pass that way offer gifts to the rock in the form of food, cigars and fruit, and invoke Lacaylacay's blessings for a safe voyage.

## *The Sampaguita*

AT THE FOOT of the towering Sierra Madre mountains lies the picturesque town of Masamio. It holds a special place in the hearts of the people for it is the spot which gave birth to the national flower of the Philippines, the lovely Sampaguita.

In the early days when Spain was just beginning to spread her dominion in the Islands by force of arms, Masamio and the surrounding villages were ruled by a native chief named Lakan-Bungabong. The chief had a daughter named Liwayway, meaning dawn; and indeed, Liwayway's beauty had a freshness that reminded you of early morn. Her skin was golden brown touched with light rose, and she had black dreamy eyes and soft black hair.

She lived in Losong. One bright morning when the orchids were still wet with dewdrops, Liwayway went to

the woods accompanied by her maids to gather flowers and fruit.

Deeper and deeper she walked into the woods, inhaling the cool forest air. In a small opening they came upon a young deer. Seeing it, Liwayway gave a cry of delight. The animal seemed to take fright and ran. Liwayway ran after it. Not heeding the maids' cries, she pursued the deer along the winding trails until, suddenly, she came face to face with a wild beast.

She stopped, clutching at her throat. It was a terrifying beast whose fierce eyes stared straight into hers. A shudder ran through her. She screamed and turning round, ran blindly. Her whole being was tense with fear. But she ran on, stumbled and fell into a deep ravine, unconscious.

Thus she lay until the next morning. When she opened her eyes, she saw a handsome young man sitting beside her.

She sat up in confusion. "Who are you?" she asked.

"I am Lakan Galing," the youth replied.

The name was familiar. Liwayway had heard of him before. He was the son of a neighbouring chieftain and known to be a brave warrior.

Lakan Galing broke the quiet and told her that he had found her lying unconscious the previous evening when he was returning home from a hunt. In turn she told him how she had got separated from her maids and of her encounter with a fearful beast.

"You must have run and fallen down here," the young man said. "I am so glad I came along and found you."



"And you have sat up the whole night watching over me?" Liwayway asked in surprise.

Lakan Galing made no reply. They sat on for a long time, talking of various things.

It was getting late and he offered to take her home. On the way they were quiet, for the thought of parting weighed heavily on their hearts.

Near her home, Lakan Galing asked, "Liwayway, when will you meet me again?"

"I shall come here tomorrow."

So they met the next day and after that everyday, for they had fallen in love with each other. They promised to be true to each other no matter what happened.

But soon after Lakan Galing had to go away. "Liwayway", he said one day, "I have to leave you."

"Why?" she asked, becoming pale.

"I must help in the fight against the foreigners who want to take our lands by force. While I am away, do you promise to be true to me?"

Tears choked her. She nodded. "I promise to think of nobody but you and to be true to you till death." She raised sorrowful eyes to him. "May Bathala keep you safe. Sumpa kitang di lilimutin." (I shall not forget you to the end.)

"I too," he answered and turned to go away.

Unfortunately Lakan Galing was killed in the fight. As long as there was hope of his return Liwayway kept up her spirits. When she heard of his death, she lost the will to live.

She grieved so much that she fell ill. Her condition grew worse day by day. On her deathbed she whis-

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pered: "Sumpa kitang di lilimutin," and breathed her last.

Many months passed. Then one day, a plant with small white fragrant flowers was seen growing on her grave. The flowers filled the air with a sweet perfume. People said: "These flowers stand for Liwayway's pure, undying love for Lakan Galing."

Since then, young men and women of the Philippines pledge their love by exchanging garlands made of these flowers. As they exchange the garlands, they whisper, "Sumpa kita."

In course of time the flowers came to be called "Sampaguita."

## *Why the Earthworm Lives in the Ground*

**W**HEN GOD created the world, the earthworm was a winged creature, with two pairs of wings and a long pointed tail. He could thus fly in the air and catch birds and insects for food. He could chase animals on the land. And he could catch fish for he was able to swim like an eel.

Now the earthworm had two close friends, the snake and the eel, in whose company he spent most of his time. One morning the earthworm decided to go fishing. On the way he stopped at the snake's and told him that he would bring him some fish for his dinner. The snake was very happy and he promptly went off to invite his cousin, the lizard, to dine with him that day.

The two of them waited eagerly for the earthworm's return. It was getting late, they were hungry, but they

waited. After all, they thought, it'd be really nice to taste fish straight from the river. Hours passed. When it was well past noon the snake gave up hope of his friend's return. "Perhaps something has happened to him," he thought and wished he hadn't invited the lizard. In his heart he was very angry with the earthworm for letting him down.

Another day the earthworm told his friend the eel that he would bring him a fowl for dinner. The eel was delighted and went to his neighbour, the "birot" (a fresh water fish) and invited him for supper.

The eel and his guest waited anxiously for the earthworm's return, but they waited in vain. Hours passed but the earthworm did not come. Disappointed, the eel apologised to his guest. He was greatly embarrassed and swore to himself that he would never trust the earthworm again.

Some days later the snake happened to visit the eel. In the course of conversation the snake mentioned how the earthworm had let him down when he invited the lizard for dinner. .

"That is just what he did to me," cried the eel indignantly and he told the snake of his own unhappy experience when the earthworm failed to turn up with the promised fowl.

"He is a treacherous fellow," the snake said. "We must give up our friendship with him."

"Yes, but we must first teach him a lesson," the eel replied and they sat long to think of a plan to punish him.

The following morning, before it was light, they came to the river for they knew that the earthworm would

## *WHY THE EARTHWORM LIVES IN THE GROUND*

soon be passing that way. The eel hid under a big stone on the riverbank while the snake coiled himself around some bushes close by.

Along came the earthworm with a merry step, quite unaware of the fate in store for him. He came near the stone and had taken but a tiny step forward when the eel caught hold of his tail and bit it off. Right at that moment the snake descended on his quarry's head and injured his eyes. They removed his wings and beat him hard until the poor creature could hardly move.

In this condition the earthworm lay for a long time. He was in acute pain and thought he would soon die. But gradually he was able to move a little, although his bones did not heal. Nor did his wings and tail grow. He found that he had become a shrunken thing.

He knew of course why his friends had done this to him. He felt ashamed that he had not kept his promises. But how was he going to show himself in this form to others? They would laugh at him, make fun of him. The more he thought of his appearance, the more he wanted to hide from the world. Where could he go? He thought and thought. Finally he burrowed into the ground. And there he lives to this day.

## *The Sultan's Choice*

SULTAN MALAKAS was no longer young. He had grown old and weak with age and knew that he had but a few years more to live.

What worried him constantly was the thought that his only daughter Mayumi was not yet married. The princess was young and pretty as a flower. There were many suitors for her hand too, and the sultan was anxious that she should marry before his death.

So he called Mayumi and told her that he wanted to make plans for her marriage.

"But whom shall I marry, Father?" asked the princess.

"The best of your suitors, of course," said the king, "one who can rule our people well."

"But how shall we pick out the best?"

"That I shall do," said the old sultan.

That very day the king sent out messengers to three

princes whom he considered eligible for his daughter's hand, inviting them to his court.

They came, three gallant young men of royal birth named Prince Magitang, Prince Marangal and Prince Dakila. Each of them was tall and handsome. Each was soft-spoken and polite. Princess Mayumi found it difficult to choose the best. She was glad that her father had to make the choice for her.

• The sultan greeted them and said, "Young men, I invited you here because I wish to announce that my fair daughter is ready to marry."

The three princes smiled and bowed.

The king continued, "You all look good and fit to be the sultan of my land, but the princess can marry only one. So I have decided to let you go on a month's trip. Look at the full moon yonder. At the next full moon, come back and bring my daughter what you consider the most precious gift. The nature of your gift will decide your luck."

Eager with hope the three young men set off on their quest at once.

The full moon waned each day and was gone. Then a crescent appeared and it grew in size each day until one bright evening a full moon rose majestically in the sky.

That evening all the bugles, trumpets and drums announced the arrival of the three suitors. The king received them royally in his court lit with many candles and decorated with flowers.

"What precious gift have you brought for my daughter, Prince Magitang?"

Kneeling, the prince opened a big bag and poured

out the contents. There, at the sultan's feet, lay precious stones of huge sizes and dazzling tints.

"These, oh Sultan, are the kings and queens of diamonds, of emeralds, of rubies, and of sapphires. From these glittering stones I will make a crown of beauty for Princess Mayumi's fair head, precious necklaces for her lovely neck, bracelets for her arms and rings for her tapering fingers."

The princess smiled and bowed gracefully, but the sultan did not say a word. He called the next suitor to come forward.

"Prince Dakila, what have you got for the princess?"

Bowing low, Prince Dakila dropped on his knees and unwrapped a long bundle. What came out was a long piece of steel with a wooden handle that he held in his hands. Then he approached the sultan.

"This, my lord, is a gun. It is the most powerful weapon now being used for warfare in civilized countries. It can kill quickly and with accuracy. With this weapon in your possession, no neighbouring enemy will dare step on this island. With this weapon you can conquer other islands. Thus you can be the most powerful ruler and conquerer on this side of the earth."

Listening to him the princess shuddered, the old sultan sighed, but the eyes of the assembled courtiers and soldiers gleamed.

"And you, Prince Marangal, what have you brought for the princess?" the sultan asked.

Diffidently the prince stepped forward. He blushed. Bowing low, he said, "Forgive me, my lord, but I have no gift for the fair princess."

"What? No gift for my daughter? Did I hear right?"



"You did, oh Sultan. I'm sorry, very sorry indeed, to come here without a gift for I would like to marry the princess, but I was so busy all the time that I had no time to search for a gift worthy of her."

"Busy? No time to search?" repeated the sultan uncomprehendingly. "May I ask what you were busy with?"

"My lord, when I started out from here I found a stranger bleeding and dying by the wayside. I took care of him till he was able to look after himself. Then I left and went on my way, but I had not gone far when I came across a group of frightened women and children fleeing from their homes. On enquiry I learned that a band of pirates had plundered their town, killed most of the men and looted their property. The few men that were left wanted to fight the pirates but they needed a leader. I could not leave those poor, terrified people, so I led the men. We fought hard and drove the thieves away. After that there was so much to do, taking care of the wounded, burying the dead, clearing the rubbish and settling the widows and orphans. In all this work I forgot about the gift. Not until I saw the full moon did I remember it, so I have come here to ask for your pardon."

The old sultan raised his head. His eyes were dim with tears. He motioned Prince Marangal to come near and took the youth's hardened hands in his own. Then he smiled and said: "To this noble prince who has come without a gift, but whose hands bear the priceless marks of having rendered service to his fellowmen, I hereby give my daughter in marriage."

## *The Man and the Magic Pebble*

ONCE UPON a time there lived a man who could walk in the rain without getting wet. His name was Dao-il. In appearance he was short and well-built with hairy arms and legs. His skin was dark brown and shiny.

Dao-il was a hunter. He could tell an animal by the footprints it left on the ground. He could name the birds by the songs they sang and the queer sounds they made. With his brown dog, Kimat, he lived in a squat cogon shack by a brook not far from a dense forest. His little home was barely visible amidst the tall bananas that grew in his field.

One dark night Dao-il had a strange experience. He was awakened from deep sleep by a small, thin man with a long moustache, who was shaking him by the shoulder. The hunter jumped to his feet and held the little man tightly in his grip. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" he shouted.

"Oh, Dao-il," the small man spoke in a shrill voice, "sit down and be calm. I shall tell you why I am here."

The hunter relaxed his grip.

The little man began, "I am the dwarf of the brook and I live among the ferns at the foot of that big narra tree yonder," he pointed to the tree. "I came to tell you a secret which only dwarfs know. Dao-il, you are an honest man, brave and true. You deserve a reward from me."

"I have heard about you, good dwarf, and have long wanted to meet you," said Dao-il. "Please excuse me for my bad temper. Did I hurt you?"

The dwarf smiled with understanding.

"No, and you are pardoned. If you can do what I am going to tell you, you will be a happier man. You will have many friends."

"I will do whatever you tell me to do," the hunter promised.

"Then pay close attention to my words. Tomorrow morning before the sun is up, go out into your banana plantation and select a plant with the largest unopened blossom."

"What will I do with it?"

"Put up a bamboo platform below that blossom," the dwarf continued. "Lay a leaf on that part of the platform where you expect the blossom to point when it bends. Watch the whole night for the white magic pebble that will fall from it as it bends, pointing earthward."

"Magic pebble!" Dao-il repeated with surprise.

"Yes," the dwarf said. "You will be the most powerful man in this corner of the earth if you get it. But I must

warn you, you will have to fight for it. Be ready to show how brave and strong you are. Take your sharp bolo and your rattan cane to help you defend yourself."

"Defend myself from what?"

"From those who have heard of the magic pebble and are interested in getting it," the little man said.

Dao-il thanked his visitor and promised to do exactly as he had been told.

"Goodbye," said the dwarf, and turning around, disappeared in the dark night.

Dao-il rose early next morning and went to his banana field. He selected the banana plant with the largest unopened blossom. He put up a bamboo platform under it. Then he fetched the largest leaf that could be found in the forest and laid it on the platform.

Before dark that evening he returned to his field and sat down to watch for the erect blossom to bend. He waited and waited till it was midnight. He was beginning to feel uneasy when, all of a sudden the earth shook, the banana plants swayed noisily and bowed their leafy heads. Just then the erect banana blossom began to bend. With fascinated eyes the hunter watched the beautiful sight.

The blossom became a large ball of shining silver, shedding a bright glow over the surroundings. Down came a white little stone, round like a marble, bouncing once, twice, thrice on the hard bamboo platform. Before Dao-il could catch it, it fell on the grassy earth, jumping farther and farther away. He ran after it, stumbled in his hurry, got on his feet again and ran. He finally caught the little thing as it alighted on a grassy leaf. Then he heard the tramping of a hundred,

heavy feet. The large banana leaves swayed and danced as if in a storm, and the stalks groaned like bamboos in a September wind.

From the banana plants an angry giant emerged, followed by another, and yet another. The mighty figures loomed over him, blocking his view beyond. Putting the white pebble in his mouth, Dao-il unsheathed his bolo and struck the first giant who fell face down in two. Before he could breathe, the second giant advanced. Again the hunter struck him with his bolo which became alive and eager in his hand. Now he jumped to lengthen his reach, aiming his weapon right and left, and slashed at his enemies with all his might. Several fell while the rest fled in fear.

As Dao-il listened to the sound of heavy, retreating steps, the dwarf of the previous night appeared before him, smiling and smoothing his long, grey moustache.

"Well done, my good man. I congratulate you on your fearless courage."

Tired and trembling, Dao-il took out the pebble from his mouth and held it before the dwarf. "What shall I do with it?"

"Keep it. It will be yours all your life. As long as you can carry it with you, you can walk in the rain and cross big rivers without getting wet, for yours is the power of the banana leaf. You will be very strong, for yours is the strength of twenty men. And you need not go hunting any more, for the wild animals will come flocking near your fences."

"Thank you," Dao-il said in a tense voice, but when he looked again, the dwarf had vanished.

Next morning Dao-il visited the banana field that

## *TALES FROM EASTERN LANDS*

had been the scene of previous night's battle. He stood dumbfounded with surprise when he found that not giants, but large banana stalks had fallen, cut down in halves and were piled in big heaps on the ground.

Dao-il lived to a long, long age. He made many friends to whom he remained true all his life. But no one ever found out the secret of his strength; nor why the wild animals of the forest came flocking to him and why he could walk in the rain without getting wet.